OUTLAW TRAILS

GEORGE WITTEN

George Witten as a scout in the Boer War at 17 years of age

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A Yankee Hobo Soldier of the Queen

by

George Witten

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By GEORGE WITTEN

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To The Memory

of

"Red"

An outlaw, a vagrant, and a liar—but a square shooter, and the truest pal any man ever had; this book is affectionately dedicated.

George Witten

Author's Note

This is not an apology or any attempt at excuse for having chosen a life of vagabondage, which for years kept me wandering about the world, often resorting to things that were far without the pale of the law, which society condemns, and which often threw me into the clutches of the law, and landed me in jail. I merely set forth the following outline of my early childhood as a reason for what I did.

My mother attempted to instill in me a pride of family. Repeatedly she would point out the heroic exploits of one or the other of my ancestors and set them as a mark for me to live up to. Though I was born in New York my father had held a commission in the British Army, and my eldest sister was born in Africa. Mother often told me of living inside the stockades when thousands of armed Kaffirs surrounded the compound during the Zulu War. She would tell me of her meeting with Louis Napoleon just before his death at the hands of the Zulus.

Her father had been Vice Admiral in the British Navy, and all the men of her family had been professional men, who had carried their professions into the far corners of the earth. At an early age I had had read to me, and had been induced to study, a

book which gave my father's family history back to the year 800, when it stopped with a Moorish brigand, who commanded ten thousand lances and was the terror of North Africa. I never tired of reading and hearing about him. Horses had been his mania. The report told how he had destroyed cities for the sake of capturing some exceptionally fine animal. He would ride hundreds of miles and declare war against another powerful chief, if he refused to surrender a certain horse of repute.

The stout fellow lived by capturing caravans on the desert and by pillaging cities. Finally a combined army of French, Spanish, and Portuguese surrounded and captured him. But he remained a problem, for they dared not execute him because his power was so far-reaching that news of his death would have brought a general revolt in Northern Africa, and the condemnation of the civilized world. Yet he would not accept release with a condition that he stop his brigandage. For many months they held him a prisoner, and finally mastered him with the aid of sparkling wines and beautiful women. He accepted parole in Madrid, and entered upon a continuous round of gayety, which ended in his death through apoplexy. But before he died he married a Spanish girl, and through her founded a long line of adventurers, who have fought in every army in the world.

Very early in life I determined to emulate this old brigand, and by the time I was ten years old I had

run away from home twice, and from boarding school twice. While in boarding school on the upper Hudson I stole my first horse. He was an old skate that had been taken from the city and put out to pasture on a nearby farm. I made a bridle of twisted wire and rope, and rode him bare-back. I had to lead him up to a fence to get on him, but once on his back I always felt that I was on the road to becoming a desert prince. A slow trot was the fastest speed I ever got out of him; but most of the time I was content to have him walk, his backbone being so sharp it nearly ruined me on several occasions.

I kept him in an old shed near the railroad, and stole feed for him from the neighboring farms. I rode him mostly at night, and along deserted lanes. He was only one of a number of run-down animals recuperating in the pasture; so it was weeks before he was missed.

One night several of the school boys saw me sneaking out of the school dormitory and followed. They discovered my secret and each demanded a ride on my charger.

"I'll get you all horses!" I boasted.

Immediately I was a king-pin hero, and acclaimed their leader. Mounting my horse I led them along lanes to the pasture, and then directed them to catch seven other horses as decrepit as my own—those with more life we couldn't get near.

That night I told them about my brigand an-

cestor. We formed ourselves into a band of desperate outlaws, and I was elected chief.

We had horses; now we needed guns. There was a farmer near the school who used to fire a shotgun into the air to scare us out of his orchards. We planned to steal his gun, and with it we were going to hold up a hardware store, and get a supply of guns and ammunition, after which we intended to take our horses and ride to the north of Africa, and hold up caravans; though one boy was of the opinion that we would do better to hold up mail coaches on the western prairies, and another was all for becoming train bandits. But as chief of the outlaws I swept these ideas aside and stuck to my plan of leading them to the desert.

One old skate out of a drove might go unnoticed for a time, but eight attracted attention. The next evening when we sneaked out of school, and I led the gang to the shed for a ride, we got a surprise. The sheriff was there with a posse of deputies, to capture the horse thieves. We were taken to the head of the school, and thrashed.

That thrashing was too much for my pride. I felt that as a brigand chief I should have been treated with more respect. They might have put me in irons and let me rot in jail, or they might have hanged me, either would have been treatment worthy of my station; but having the seat of my trousers dusted with a paddle was an indignity that couldn't be passed without revenge. The following night I started a

fire in the basement of the school, and then took the road for home.

The fire was put out without much trouble and I was caught before I had gone more than a couple of miles. The school sent me home, labeled a dangerous incorrigible. Again my mother told me at length about my noble ancestors, and shamed me because I was not following in their footsteps. I tried to tell her that I was, but she didn't seem to understand. Friends of the family advised her to send me to work on a farm; so she arranged for me to live with a farmer and his family in Indiana.

For a time the farm life kept me happy and satisfied. There were horses for me to ride, and cattle—mostly milk cows—for me to herd, but soon the limitations of the farm cramped my spirits, and I began to dream of wider fields, where one might give expression to heroic tendencies. So one Sunday morning, when I had excuse to put on my best clothes, I left the farm, presumably to attend a camp meeting, but in fact to travel as far as I could by walking, and hitching rides. I had a little money, and before it gave out I had traveled over a hundred miles toward the West. For a time I got odd day's work on farms, but found it rough sledding, until I met Red, who gave me a broader vision of life, and showed me the glories of the Open Road.

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OUTLAW TRAILS

CHAPTER 1

Outlaw Trails

WHEN a fellow is just a kid and is hundreds of miles from his friends and has only thirty cents in his pocket, he is pretty apt to develop keenly the primal instincts of self-preservation. That was the position I was in. I had wanted to see the world —and I was seeing it. That morning I crawled out from between the lumber stacks where I had slept the night before. I had spent twenty cents for my breakfast and was trying to make that meal last through the day, which for a healthy boy, who had been working in the cornfields, was no easy thing to do.

The corn had been laid-by in Indiana, and there would be little work there until harvest time. Late in the afternoon I stood looking down the sleepy, sweltering street of the town I had walked into the night before hoping that I might find work there. I had an empty, gnawing feeling in my stomach. From across the dusty street a tall, loose set young man with flaming red hair approached.

"Say, Kid," he planted himself in front of me, "could you stake a fellow to a feed? I ain't eaten in two days." He rolled his blue eyes, twisted his thin lips, and clutched at his sides, as if in pain.

Gosh! I was hungry, but here was a really desperate case! "I ain't eaten since morning, but I've got thirty cents here. We can each get a cup of coffee and a sandwich, if it's any help."

"Say, Kid, are you on the bum?" The blue eyes ceased to roll and the thin lips broke into a half smile.

"I don't get you," I said.

"This your home town?"

"No, I been working around here. Do you want that sandwich and coffee?"

"Sure thing. Where'll we go?"

"There's a place down by the station."

"You're all to the good, boy, an' I'm glad to know you. My name's John Hannibal Wilkins, my friends call me 'Red.' " He shoved his hand through my arm, and leaned against my shoulder in a chummy manner.

"They call me 'Buddy,' " I said, not caring to tell my name.

"Buddy! That just fits you!" laughed Red.

Arm in arm we pushed through the swinging doors of the hash house, climbed up on a couple of stools, and rested our elbows on the smeary marble top of the counter.

"This ain't a bad joint," said Red. "I had lunch here to-day."

"What'er you guys goin' ter have?" asked the waiter before I could express my surprise.

"Roast beef sandwich and coffee for two," I said.

"Naw, let's make it sausage an' mash, with coffee an' apple pie to follow," said Red, flipping two half dollars on the counter. "You're my guest, Buddy, an' you gotta eat something good."

"I don't understand," I said, staring at the money.

"Well, as you're my pal, I'll explain. I've gotta graft, but this town's too dead to work it in, an' I don't believe in spending money where you can't make it. If you ain't gotta graft you gotta panhandle. I decorate mirrors in restaurants, I'm an artist. What's your line?"

"I've been working on farms mostly, but there ain't any work 'round here. I wish I was out in Kansas."

"If you wish you was out in Kansas, then why in hell don't you up and go out in Kansas?"

"I ain't got any money, an' it's a long way to walk."

"Don't talk about walking, it blisters your feet. If you're so keen to be out in Kansas, we'll head for there to-night. If we don't have no bad luck we'll be in Kansas in three or four days. But we gotta get a graft for you."

When we had finished our feed Red handed me a cigarette, and we smoked contentedly. Life had taken

on a different aspect, I began to feel some of Red's reckless optimism, the world had become a good place to live in. Red was the most cheerful liar I have ever met, yet he was one of the truest pals I ever had. He taught me many things that have been useful through life. Best of all he taught me to smile in the face of adversity.

The proprietor of the restaurant was busy behind the cigar counter. Red went to him and asked: "Are you the boss?"

"I am," snapped the little man.

"My name's Theodore Prescott Sutherland," said Red. "I'm an artist. I can doll your mirrors up. Here, let me show you!" He took a piece of soap from his pocket and deftly drew an eagle, clasping a scroll and bundle of arrows, on the nearest mirror.

"How's that? Peachy! ain't she?" he stood back admiringly.

"How much to do all three mirrors?" asked the boss.

"A dollar apiece, an' I'll do you something nifty!"

"Too much, I'll give you two dollars for the job."

"All right, two dollars, an' a feed for me an' my pal."

"Well, only a fifty cent feed, I don't care who eats it."

Then I watched my soap artist pal draw a mass of flowers, birds and girls' heads on the mirrors, all the while humming. When the drawing with the soap was finished, he took out a small water-color box and

touched up spots here and there in bright blues, reds and yellows. As he worked a crowd of loafers gathered.

"Say, where'd you learn to do that?" asked a town sport.

"Oh, I studied for years in Paris, Berlin, Rome, Vienna. I got pictures in all the best galleries. This is just a little holiday, me an' my pal's out seeing the country." Then he stuffed them with stories of travel in Europe. "That's the place to be in, a fellow can always get a drink there."

"Like a little drink?" whispered the town sport.

"Sure thing," said Red.

"Bring your friend and come with me, we'll shake this crowd."

We followed the sport out. He led us to a speakeasy, where a bunch of Main Street sports had gathered. Red was soon the central figure of the crowd. He had little difficulty in persuading the owner to let him decorate his mirrors in return for a round of drinks. Then having "paid our footing," we spent the evening there. Red was drinking whisky, but insisted that I drink ginger ale. "I promised his folks I wouldn't let him drink anything stronger," he explained to the crowd.

During the next couple of hours I learned that Red and I had traveled over half the world. That we had mixed with princes and nobles, and were now getting a rest from high society.

"Where are you stopping in town?" asked a sport.

"We're not stopping," said Red. "We're going to Evansville, and I guess we'd better be moving. We've got one or two things to attend to before train time."

Leaving the speak-easy we made our way back to the restaurant to collect the feed that was due us.

"Eat whenever you get a chance," said Red, "because sometimes it's a long while between meals."

On a siding at the station lay a freight train under steam, waiting for the Evansville accommodation to pass. Circling clear of the station I followed Red to the far side of the freight.

"We might take the passenger, and hold down the 'blind,'" he explained, "but that would mean staying awake all night."

I didn't know what he was talking about, so said nothing and waited to see what was to follow. I wanted to get to Kansas and I believed that Red could get me there.

"Hey, bo, what town's this?" asked a tousled head sticking out of the side door of a box-car.

"Wayford," said Red, "a rotten dump!"

"What's the matter, she hostile?"

"Naw, too dead to be hostile. What kinda doss you got?"

"Good one, come on in, we got a pile of straw."

"Many in there?"

"Naw, only me an' a greaser."

"All right, give the kid a hand up," said Red. "Come on, Buddy, slip in! Make it snappy before the shack sees us!"

I took the hand of the hobo, and with a boost from Red was hauled into the box-car. Then I helped the hobo pull Red up.

"Here comes the shack, we'd better keep quiet," said the hobo, and pushed the door shut.

Then I had my first thrilling sensation of being an outlaw. When I was pulled through the door of the box-car I was pulled into another world, a world of adventure and hardship. When the hobo closed the door I felt that my past life had been shut out. I was no longer a plodding farm hand, I had stepped outside the law, into the realm where men lived by their wits. If we were caught it meant prison, but the idea filled me with an elation hard to describe. I heard the brakeman, or shack, crunching along on the gravel, examining the couplings and axle-boxes. When he stopped beside our car my heart was thumping, and my breath seemed to stop. Then he crunched away and I breathed freely.

The accommodation thundered into the station, stopped a few minutes, and chugged out again. Then the freight began to rattle and jerk, and finally settled down to a steady roll. We were on our way to Kansas.

"How about a little game?" said the hobo, as he pulled the door open a crack, "the Mexican's got a deck."

"Righto, bo," Red fished a candle from his pocket, and struck a match. The candle flickered and spluttered, throwing a dancing light over the car and the

hobos. In one corner sat the swarthy Mexican, rolling a brown paper cigarette, his beady eyes blinking. Leaning against the door was a short heavy-set man with friendly blue eyes that laughed above a week's growth of stubby beard. "They call me Joe," he said, looking at Red, "an' I guess by your mop they call you Red."

"Yep, that's right, an' me pal's known as Buddy."

Red raked a pile of straw into one corner with his feet. "Here you are, Kid, doss down and get your beauty sleep. The Kid don't play cards," he explained to the others.

Joe and the greaser each pulled a stub of candle from their pockets and lighted them. They cleared a space on the floor, stuck the candles on the boards, then squatted around them, the Mexican with his back to me.

I sat on my pile of straw in the corner and watched the play. Red was talking glibly with each deal. Joe was smiling, but saying little. The Mexican was surly and taciturn. Money clinked on the car floor, the candles flickered and spluttered, the train rolled and swayed through the night. Ahead the engine whistle shrilled for a crossing. I grew drowsy, stretched myself out and was soon sleeping the sound sleep of a tired, healthy boy.

I dreamed of the wheat-fields in Kansas. I with Red, and Joe, and the greaser, were all busy around a great vibrating thresher. Suddenly I woke and heard loud cursing.

"You calla me liar!" yelled the greaser through bared teeth.

"Yes, you're that and then some!" said Red, reaching across and yanking the Mexican's vest open. From under it fell two cards.

They had forgotten me. I was scared and jumped to my feet, just as the greaser whipped out a knife and raised it for a lunge at Red. I caught his hand and held it for a moment. Red fell back, twisted his body, and lashed out with both feet, catching the Mexican full on the jaw. The knife fell to the floor, as the Mexican crumbled up. Red sprang to his feet and stood over him.

"Get up, you dirty greaser! and fight like a white man!" He caught him by the collar and shook him.

One of the candles had been knocked down and had set fire to the straw. Joe stamped it out, and grabbing the other two held them up to give the fighters light. "Stand back!" he ordered me. "Give 'em room!" He crowded me into a corner.

The greaser staggered to his feet and made a grab for Red's throat. Red caught him a blow on the chin, then they clinched and went to the floor struggling, snarling, cursing. They rolled and twisted up and down the car, the greaser biting and clawing, Red using only his fists. The greaser had his teeth dug deep into Red's cheek, while his hands clawed at his eyes. I thought Red was being killed, and tried to get in and help him, but Joe pushed me back. "Leave 'em alone, Kid!" he said, "Red'll kill the greaser

afore they're through! 'Tain't fair to interfere!" Then smiled as if he were enjoying it.

Then I learned one of the laws of the Open Road, a fight was a fight to a finish.

Both men were covered with blood, their clothes ripped and torn. Now Red had the Mexican by the throat with one hand, with the other he was pounding his face. The greaser stopped fighting and lay back limp on the floor, his eyes closed, his nose mashed flat, his lips cut and bleeding. Red half rose from the motionless figure and careened to the side of the car, where he lay panting.

While Joe leaned over him with the candles I knelt beside Red, and lifting his head in my arm wiped the blood from his face. In that moment I loved him with all the love of a boy's hero worship. No one paid any attention to the Mexican. He might have been dying, or even dead, it didn't matter.

"It's all right, Kid," mumbled Red, and spat out a clot of blood, "I'll be fit again in a minute." He sat up and looked sorrowfully at his clothing. "I'll have to brace some one for a new outfit. Got to keep up a front in my line."

Joe had taken off his coat and vest; now he pulled off his shirt and handed it and the vest to Red. "Here, put these on, Red. I can get some more, an' it'll make it easier for you to bum a coat." He put his own coat on again and turned up the collar.

The train slowed down and stopped beside a water tank. We blew out the candles, and Joe looked to

see if the coast was clear. Then he slipped out and returned in a few minutes with a bucket of water. Red clutched the bucket, and drank in great gulps. Then he bathed his swollen hands and face.

The Mexican was coming back to life, as the train chugged forward, and half raised up on his elbow, then sank back again.

"Come on, Kid, let's ditch the greaser." said Joe, pushing the door wide open. "Here, catch him by his arms and legs, and when I count three let him go!" Together we held the greaser clear of the floor, swung him back and forth, and, on the word "Go" from Joe, heaved him to the side of the track.

We pushed the door shut, lighted the candles, and made ourselves comfortable for the night.

"I hate a liar," said Red, as he stretched out in the straw.

When I woke daylight was streaming into the car, and Joe was shaking my shoulder. "Come on, fellows, she's rolling into Evansville! We gotta hop it before we get into the yards!"

I rubbed my eyes and tried to collect my senses. Red was pulling himself up painfully from the straw. He looked a sorry sight after his fight with the Mexican.

"Hey, make it snappy!" urged Joe, "the bulls in this burg are fierce, an' the judge is worse than the bulls! He don't know how to say anything, but 'Sixty days.'"

We got to our feet and went to the door. The train

was slowing down, but still hitting a fair clip as it entered the yards.

"Now look, Kid," said Red, "as you slide down face the way she's going, get your legs swinging fast and hit the ground on a run, don't try to stop or you'll get a spill. You watch Joe. Go ahead, Joe, show the kid how it's done."

Joe slid through the door, faced toward the engine, swung his legs clear, hit the ground running at a tangent from the train, sprinted a good twenty yards, then slowed up to a walk.

"See, it's easy," said Red, "now slide out, Kid!"

I followed Joe's example, swung my feet clear, hit the ground on a run, crossed my legs, turned a sort of hand-flop and landed in a heap of gravel.

"Say, Red, do you know the jungle of this dump?" asked Joe, when we had got up into the town.

"Sure thing. It's on the north side, near a mill."

"That's right. You hit for there. Me an' Buddy'll razz the town for a few hand-outs. That mug of your'n would scare a woman stiff. See you later. Make it. Dolly Grey and Swanee River."

"All right, bo. Guess my mug does look fierce. Buddy, you go with Joe, an' if any one asks you what you're doin', tell 'em you're looking for work. Remember, Kid, don't ever tell a lie when the truth suits best."

"This part of town ain't no good," explained Joe, "it's too near the yards. Don't ever try to work the houses near the yards. That's what bums an' blanket-

stiffs do." He mentioned these characters with contempt.

"What's a blanket-stiff?" I asked.

"A blanket-stiff, or bundle-stiff, is a guy that carries a bundle of stuff in a blanket. They ain't got no guts. They save their money, an' when they get pinched pay their fines. The bulls can always spot 'em an' they're always getting pinched. A bum's a fellow that's too damn lazy to hustle or work. He don't have any money. Don't ever be a bum or a blanket-stiff. And until you learn some kinda trade you can't be a gay-cat. They're fellows that hobo from one town to another to work at their trades."

We walked till we came to a quiet suburb, where each house stood in a neat plot of ground by itself. "Here," said Joe, "are the sort of places to work. These kinda people hardly ever turn you down. You hit this side of the street an' I'll razz the other. Go 'round the back doors, an' ask 'em if you can do some work for a little food. They ain't likely to have anything to do, but they'll hand you out something. If they ask you in for a set-down, you'll have to go in an' eat, but try an' get some hand-outs, 'cause we gotta take something out for Red. I'll meet you at the end of the street."

I walked half a block, but couldn't muster courage to tackle a house. My heart was beating fast, a cold sweat broke out all over me. The thing had seemed easy until I found myself alone, then each house loomed up dark and forbidding. I was hungry,

but felt I would rather stay hungry than tackle one of those houses. Then I thought of Red, and that he was depending on me.

I saw Joe come out from the side of the house. He smiled and patted his pocket, walked down the street a way, then turned in at another house. This gave me courage, and I made a dive down a side path that led to a kitchen entrance. At the door my courage left me, my knees trembled, and a lump came into my throat. I stood there just dumb.

"Yes, an' phwat do you want?" the door opened suddenly, and a large red face looked down at me.

"I—I want to work for something to eat," I stammered.

"Th' saints preserve us! Do yer hear that, ma'am? Here's a slip of a lad wantin' somethin' to eat!"

"I'll work for it," I insisted, as a smart young woman came to the door.

"Where are you from?" she asked, giving me a critical look.

"Wayford, ma'am." I wanted to run.

"Do your people know where you are?"

"I haven't any people. I'm an orphan."

"But you must have a home, you must have relatives?"

"No, ma'am, I haven't anybody." I wanted to get away and was slowly edging back from the door.

"Ah, bring the kid in and give him something to eat," called a cheery male voice.

"Come in," said the young woman.

Once inside a regular panic seized me. My hunger was gone.

"Here, set ye down, lad, I'll fix ye a bit of breakfast in a minute," said the cook.

"So you're going to Kansas to work in the wheatfields. Well, I admire your pluck, young fellow," said the husband, after I had answered all his questions, bearing in mind Red's advice not to lie unless a lie suited better than the truth. "Here, stick this in your pocket, it may come in handy." He shoved a dollar bill in my hand, and left the room before I could thank him.

Alone with the cook I was more at ease. The food smelled good, and once I started to eat my appetite came back, and I cleaned up everything she put before me. The griddle-cakes were great, and each plate I ate made the cook's smile grow broader.

"You're a foin boy," she said, when I was leaving, "now take this wee bit from me." She shoved a half dollar into my hand. "Good-by an' good luck to ye, lad," she waved from the door.

At the end of the street I met Joe. He had on a freshly laundered shirt, and a good vest. His coat was bulging all around. Briefly I told him my experience, then said I wanted to buy something for Red.

"There ain't no need of that," he said, "I got a bunch of hand-outs, and some sugar an' coffee. Let's go, Red'll be waitin' an' wonderin' what's happened." He led the way toward the jungle.

"That's how they always treat a kid," he con-

tinued, "now take me, I don't ever get a set-down, they shoves me out a lump an' slams the door, I ain't had a set-down for over a year."

As we approached the camp Joe whistled a few bars of Dolly Grey, then listened for the answer, Swanee River, but none came.

He pointed to a clump of bushes and told me to wait till he came back. This continued watching for the police appealed to my imagination. I thrilled with excitement as I hid behind the bushes, and had a feeling that was almost disappointment when Joe called to me that it was all right. "Red ain't able to whistle on account of his busted lips," he explained.

Red had a fire going and a bucket of water boiling. He had scoured out a frying-pan, and three tin cans for drinking. Every hobo camp has a good supply of cooking utensils that each gang carefully hides where the next crowd can find them. Every city has its jungle, and these camps are known to the hobos from New York to San Francisco; also they are known to the police, who from time to time raid them.

"Here's some Java, an' I got some swell lumps for you, Red," said Joe, "a druggist guy gave me some grease for your mug. He said it'd fix you up in a few hours. Just smear it all over and let it stay." He handed Red a sample box of ointment.

After breakfast Joe had just finished scraping the stubble from his face before a piece of broken mirror, Red was putting the ointment on his wounds,

and I was lying in the shade of a tree, wondering what our next move would be. Suddenly we heard footsteps. Red sprang to his feet, and crouching low, slipped quietly down the path. I followed Joe and hid in the bushes.

"It's all right," called Red, "only a blanket-stiff and a gay-cat!"

"Hello, bo's," they announced themselves.

"Hello, bo's," greeted Joe and Red, "we've just finished chuck, but there's Java on the fire, dip in."

The blanket-stiff unrolled his bundle and took out a couple of hand-outs, and gave one to the gay-cat. The gay-cat had a newspaper, and handed it to Joe, who settled himself to read.

"I thought of a good line for you, Kid," said Red, "you take this coupla dollars, an' what you've got, an' go to the jobbing house on Kent Street an' buy some notions. The sort of things women use. Pins and buttons are the best. Get a stock, then go 'round the houses and tell the women you're trying to make money to go to school with. That's a gag they always fall fer."

I didn't get my supplies that day or for some time after. Things began to happen in deadly earnest. Joe suddenly sat bolt upright.

"Listen to this, bo's!" he said, his eyes bulging. "Work on the new State road commences to-day. The authorities are finding it hard to get labor. It is believed convicts will be used—" He got to his feet and walked across the camp toward the town. "This

ain't no place for little Joe! The bulls will be raidin' here before the day is out! You an' the kid coming, Red?"

Red looked at the paper. "No, I don't think there's danger."

The gay-cat got up and followed Joe down the path. The blanket-stiff shifted uneasily. Red was smiling with a sort of defiant recklessness. I was scared, but made up my mind to stick to Red.

Then came a crashing of the bushes, and Joe, followed by the gay-cat, rushed back into camp. "Beat it, bo's! For crap sake, beat it! The bulls are coming!" he yelled, and dived into the woods. Coming up the path we could hear a dozen men running.

"This way, Buddy!" Red grabbed my arm, and pulled me into the bushes.

The blanket-stiff stopped to gather up his bundle.

Red led me down a hill to a stream of water that was almost hidden by the undergrowth. "In you get!" he whispered, and together we jumped into the water, which was up to my arm pits. Hugging the steep and muddy bank we were completely hidden by the bushes. We stood in the water for over an hour, while the police searched the woods about us. Then we heard them say, "They must have beat it. Well, we've got two anyhow, and we'll get more to-morrow." Then they went away.

For several hours we walked along the country road, meeting only an occasional farmer, to whom I felt a superiority. Then we came to the outskirts

of Hamlin Junction, and decided we had better wait until dark before going in.

When night came on we went to a restaurant and had a feed, then Red left me hiding among some box-cars on a siding while he looked the ground over. When he returned I could see that he was worried.

"This place is full of bulls, an' we gotta watch out," he said. "There's a Red Ball making up. It's dangerous riding 'em, but it's our only chance. The shacks on them carry guns and are hard-boiled. If you knew how to ride the rods it wouldn't be so bad. We'll have to make it on the bumpers. When she comes I'll help you. Now don't lose your nerve or you might get killed."

Soon the through freight came rumbling slowly along. I had no difficulty in catching the hand-guard and climbing up on to the bumper. For several miles we rode undisturbed, Red keeping a look-out over the top of the car for the shacks.

"Here comes one," he called, "now watch for his light, and when you see it grab the hand-guard, swing out and put your foot on the ladder, hug the car tight, and wait till he goes by. I'll swing out from the other side!"

Red stepped on to the next bumper and stood ready. I caught the glint of the brakeman's light on top, grabbed the hand-guard, swung to the side of the car, and hung there in a panic. The rushing air seemed to be dragging my hands loose. Then suddenly the light was shining full on me.

"Get off of there!" yelled a harsh voice, and I looked into the face of the shack.

"I can't jump here!" I said, the train was hitting about forty miles an hour.

"Jump, or you'll get this." The shack leveled a pistol at me.

I was wild with terror. In the darkness I could make nothing of the ground as we rushed along. The face above the light was cold and hard.

"I—I can't!" I said. "I'll get off—"

"Jump, damn you!" The muzzle of the gun was against my head. Then I jumped into the blackness, and fell through an eternity of space.

When I came to I was lying in a marsh, daylight was breaking and Red was kneeling beside me.

"You're not real bad hurt, Kid," he said, "try and stand up. We've got to get away! Guess I killed the shack!"

He pulled me up and steadied me on my feet. Then with his arm around me we walked slowly and painfully out of the marsh, across a field, and up to a barn. Every bone and muscle in my body pained. Red was kind, but insistently urged me along. When we reached the barn I collapsed. Then he lifted me on to his shoulder, and carried me up a ladder into the hay-loft. I must have fainted with pain, for the next thing I knew I was alone, lying in the hay, and utterly helpless.

The sun was shining through the cracks in the barn. I tried to look around, but every move was

pain. I wondered where Red was, then heard him coming up the ladder.

"I got some milk an' eggs, Kid, an' a hunk of pie! I was afraid to take too much, 'cause they'll be hunting 'round here for us, and it won't do to raise suspicion. There's a town about a mile away. I'll go over there to-night and razz some real grub for us." He broke the top off a raw egg and made me swallow it. Then held my head while I drank from the big can of milk he had taken from the farm-house.

After that I felt better, and asked him what had happened.

"I saw the shack make you jump, and marked the place by this farm. When he'd gone I uncoupled the air-brake; that stopped the train, an' when that dirty skunk came looking for the trouble I split his head open with a coupling-pin. Then I beat it back. We'd run about three miles, an' it took hours to find you. Better not talk up here. If we're caught it'll mean twenty years, or worse!"

He gave me two more eggs and a piece of the apple pie; then we slept till late in the evening, when Red slipped out and went over to the village. He was gone for hours and I was afraid he had been caught. But he came back with a big bundle of food and a newspaper.

"Gee, Kid," he said, "you'd oughter read the yarn the shack told. They got him in a hospital, an' he says a gang tried to hold up the train, an' he fought 'em off! The big stiff! He ain't got guts enough to

fight a louse! You can read it in the morning. They've offered a reward for us!" he laughed. When daylight came I found that he was dressed like a farmer. He'd stolen the clothes from a house near the village.

It was several days before I was able to walk much. Every evening Red went to the village, where, he explained, he had made a bunch of friends and was teaching them how to play poker.

When I was finally fit to travel we left the barn early in the evening and walked to a water tank several miles away. Here we waited till a slow freight stopped to take on water. Red showed me how to ride the rods, for, he said, that was the safest way for us to get out of that part of the country. The rods hang down in parallel pairs under the box-cars. Each pair is coupled together with a board. There is just room for a man to stretch out with his stomach on this board and his feet on the rods. It is all right for a short run, the only disagreeable feature is that gravel and cinders continually fly up and hit you in the face, but that is a small matter compared to other hardships of the Road.

We rode the rods for about forty miles, then crawled out and found an empty box-car, where we slept till the train rolled into Cairo. Red was still leery of the bulls, and said we'd better not try to panhandle. So we went to a jobber's and I bought a supply of pins, court-plaster, and buttons. Then while Red worked his soap artist graft around the

restaurants and saloons, I peddled among the houses, using the school gag. In most places I sold, even those who didn't buy treated me well, though in a few cases the door was slammed in my face. I liked this better than asking for food, and by evening I had several dollars in my pocket.

That night I rode my first "blind." The blind is the front platform of the front baggage car of a passenger train, which is right behind the coal-tender. The door leading out to it is locked and baggage piled against it on the inside. The thing is to lie low on the opposite side of the train from the station, then as she pulls out run and jump her. The train crew are all busy on the station side, and seldom pay attention to the other. When she is slowing down for a stop you must watch to see which side the station is on, and jump off just before you get there, then run ahead and find another hiding place to wait in until she pulls out again. It requires some hustling to do this and keep clear of the bulls.

We held down the blind for three stops, then the fireman appeared over the end of the tender. "Hey, you guys!" he called, "come up here and pass coal!"

Red grinned. "Take us to the end of your run?"

"Sure, right into Kay City!"

We climbed up into the tender, and all night Red and I took turns with the fireman passing coal. The work was easy, and to me thrilling to be riding in the engine cab between times. About two o'clock in the morning the engineer and the fireman opened

their dinner pails and we all had a big feed with hot coffee.

At Kansas City we crossed the State line.

"Well, here we are, Kid, this is Kansas. What part did you want to go to?" Red had never asked me why I wanted to get to Kansas. It is a law of the road not to ask personal questions.

"I wanted to get work in the wheat-fields."

"Oh, that's your game, all right, there's an agency here hires men for that."

At the agency we found a gang ready to be shipped out. Labor was scarce, and I was big for my age, and the gang boss said he'd take me.

"So long, Buddy." There was a wistful look in Red's face as he turned and walked away.

I looked at the gang boss, a big good-natured fellow, then looked at Red's retreating back.

"Hey, Red!" I yelled, "wait a minute!"

Red stopped, turned around, and smiled.

"I'm going with you!" I called.

I just couldn't leave Red. The lure of the Open Road had me. I had become a hobo.

CHAPTER 2

A Road Kid

"WE'D better make ourselves scarce," said Red, turning down a side street, "that son-of-a swab will be tipping the bulls off. He's sore!"

I glanced back at the gang boss, who was spluttering with rage. A mixture of fear and elation came over me; also, there was defiance. I felt that I was now a real knight of the road, and that Red, my pal, could outwit all the bulls in the country.

Red was whistling, with his hands shoved deep into his pockets. He might be a liar and an outlaw, but he was good enough for me. Besides, I had become an outlaw myself, and we were bound by the closest of bonds, that of having a reward offered for our arrest. The weeks we had been together and the hard knocks we had shared made Red my hero. Hadn't he fought for me, stolen for me, and nursed me when I lay sick and bruised in the hay-loft, after being ditched from a Red Ball going forty miles an hour?

He was an outlaw with a code, and a sense of fairness. He made no comment on my decision to stick to him; but I believe he was really glad that I did, though he would never have made the slightest attempt to keep me on the Road.

Men were scarce in Kansas that summer, and a bumper wheat crop was threatened with ruin for want of labor. My age and scrawny figure cut no ice with the gang boss. He knew that once he had me on the prairie he would find a way to get work out of me. But work was held in contempt by Red, and I was trying to adopt Red's code of life.

As we neared the yards two heavy-jowled fellows in derby hats stepped from a doorway and blocked our path. Even to my inexperienced eye they had "detective" written all over them. My heart sank, and I visioned Red and myself doing a life stretch behind iron bars.

"Mornin', gentlemen," drawled Red, smiling. "Know if there's a chance of gettin' work with the section boss?"

The bulls were hard-boiled, and looked at us skeptically.

"Yeh! What's the matter with the wheat-fields?" asked one.

"Nothin' wrong with the wheat-fields," said Red. "It's me. Can't stand 'em on account o' hay fever. Thought maybe there'd be work on the section or the yards."

"Ain't nothing doing around the yards. Who's the kid?" The bull looked me up and down.

"That's brother Joe. He can work all right," Red spoke with the drawl of a farmer, and looked at me with brotherly pride. "He's mighty strong fer his age, ain't you, Joe?"

"You bet!" I drew myself up, and threw out my chest.

"You want work with the section, hey? Well, we'll see that you get it!" The two bulls turned and walked beside us.

There had been nothing said about arrest. But there was plenty of work to be had, and they weren't tolerating idleness of any kind. Men who didn't work voluntarily were being jailed and made to work for nothing.

The section boss looked at us critically, then decided he could use us down at Carthage, where they were building a culvert.

"A work train leaves here in an hour's time," he said, and handed us each a card filled in with the names Red gave him.

"You'd better not wander far from that train, either," said the chief bull, "or you'll be doing thirty days."

Red grinned, and motioned me to follow him to the work train lying on a nearby siding. I was afraid even to look at bulls, who, I knew, were watching us.

In the work train we found an assortment of bums and stiffs. Like us, most of them had agreed to work because they knew they'd be jailed if they didn't.

"Well, Kid," grinned Red, "we'll have a day on the 'cushions' " (hobo vernacular for riding inside a passenger train).

The car for the section hands was an old one, and over half the seats were broken. On one platform a

crap game was in progress, and most of the bums were gathered there. We had no difficulty in finding a couple of good seats, which we threw together, then stretched out for a sleep. We had traveled all the night before, and were feeling pretty tired.

From the crap game rose the voice of a loud-mouthed man, who was raising objections at every throw of the dice. This fellow had big, hulking shoulders and a bulldog jaw. The other stiffs were afraid of him, and it was clear that he had established himself master of the gang.

I closed my eyes and thought of the world I was going to see under the guidance of Red; then fell asleep listening to the crowd swear. When I woke the train was in motion, and I was sliding to the floor as the big fellow pushed the back of my seat over and swept me off.

"Hey, you big stiff! That's my seat!" I half rose from the floor.

"Shut up!" The big man's fist landed on my jaw and laid me flat.

Red stepped on me as he sprang at the bully. It was a quick mix-up, and was soon over. The big man struck blindly, but Red was too quick for him. Smashing, gouging, strangling, they clinched and rolled the length of the car. The bums gave them clear space, many glad to see the bully getting a licking. Sitting astride the big man Red jammed one thumb into his wind-pipe, and with his free hand battered the fellow's face.

From bleeding lips the bully gurgled for mercy; then Red let him up slowly.

"Go back and fix that seat like you found it!" he said, when the big fellow had gained his feet; then followed him down the car and stood with doubled fists while he did it.

"All right, Kid," said Red, after my seat had been adjusted, "go on and take a sleep."

I looked at the bully as he slunk away. His leadership was gone. The crowd was jeering openly. Past him, standing in the doorway, I saw the section boss grinning largely.

Though I saw hundreds of fights on the Road, and was forced to mix in a few myself, I never once saw what is known as a fair stand-up fight. On the Road men clawed, strangled, gouged, kicked and bit. Hoboes rarely carry weapons. At times you will meet a man with an extra large knife, but his chief purpose in carrying it is to cut up his food, and whittle kindling wood.

At noon we were served fairly good corned beef sandwiches and coffee, and that night we found a hot meal waiting for us at the work camp outside of Carthage. We slept on wire bunks filled with straw, and after a good breakfast of oatmeal with plenty of milk and sugar, ham and eggs with fried potatoes, coffee, corned bread and molasses, I was all ready to start the day's work at seven the next morning.

Red rolled and lit a cigarette; then said: "Come

on, Kid, let's hit the grit," and commenced to walk away.

"Hey! What's the game?" asked the section boss, stepping toward us. He was a big man, and his fists were doubling up.

"We're quitting," said Red. "We don't like your outfit."

The boss took another step; then stopped. He had seen Red mix it with the bully on the train, and the section camp stood alone, there was nothing within a mile of it.

"I'll make you assistant foreman," he said, "and you can see that the kid don't work too hard."

"Thanks," grinned Red, "but we got an appointment out in Cheyenne." Then he turned and I walked beside him down the track.

Some of the bums moved to follow us, but the section boss landed a swift blow on the jaw of the nearest one, and they all turned and went back.

From that day Red started to educate me properly to the lore of the Road. On the trip to Kansas City from Indiana he had made things easy for me. Then he had regarded me as merely a boy whom he was helping to get to a definite destination. Now, since I had given myself to the Road, he seemed intent on making me a "blown-in-the-glass stiff."

He taught me how to "hold 'em down". Together we rode the rods, the trucks, the bumpers, the deck —which is the top of the train, the cow-catcher of the engine, and the rumbler of the coal-tender. He

taught me how to get in and out of refrigerator cars, and cattle cars.

Then, when I had mastered the freights, he took me on to the passengers, first the locals, then the throughs, till we were holding down the limiteds, traveling hundreds of miles on the fastest trains in the world. North and south, east and west, for nearly two years we wandered. He taught me how to "sling my feet" for food, how to work a graft, and to panhandle the "main-drag" of a town for change.

Often we became separated. Perhaps he would make a train and I would miss it. At times one of us would get ditched. On these occasions I always knew what to do to find him again. I would go to the nearest division of the line we were traveling on, find the jungle—the hobo camp, and wait till he came; though he was nearly always there ahead of me.

We were spending the winter in the South. Late one afternoon we were slinging our feet for our evening meal on opposite sides of a residential street. There was a freight pulling out at six-thirty which we intended to take, and we were loading up with food for the journey.

As I came out of the side entrance of a house, where I had just been given a large hand-out, I saw Red nabbed by two detectives. One was holding him by the arm and collar, the other was trying to unlock a pair of hand-cuffs. Here was a situation that required quick action. My pal was in serious trouble.

The dicks hadn't seen me—they were too intent on their prisoner. In front of the house I had just come from there were two large flower-beds curbed with white-washed stones about the size of baseballs. I grabbed up three of these and ran, under cover of the hedge, until I was within a few feet of the group on the sidewalk.

I let drive at the man holding Red, putting all my strength into the throw. The stone landed on his head and he fell in a heap. The other bull dropped the hand-cuffs he was wrestling with and made a grab for his gun; but before he could draw Red had landed him a swift blow on the jaw and a terrific kick in the stomach, that made him double up. Then, as Red jumped the hedge, I let drive with the two remaining stones.

We left both bulls lying unconscious, and streaked across lots to the edge of town, where we lay in a fence corner until night set in. Then we hiked across country on foot, not daring to go near the railroads, or even to travel on the highways.

That was the first and only time Red gave me a dressing-down.

"Don't ever do that again," he admonished. "If we're caught now, we'll go up for years. It ain't worth it."

"But didn't you bust the head of the shack when he made me jump the Red Ball?" I asked.

"That's different," he explained. "That shack was a dirty b———. He pulled a gun on a kid, and damn

near killed you, when there was no need for it. Those bulls were just doing their duty, and the most I'd have got would have been sixty days hard, and more than likely it would have only been thirty.

"You gotta learn, Kid, that there's times when it's best to arbitrate. More'n likely I could have talked them into letting me go. But nothing we could say would save us now. Besides, you want to remember that if we get caught at any time you'd be sent to a reformatory until you're twenty-one, where I'd only get thirty days.

"I know you meant well, Kid, and I appreciate it; but don't ever do it again."

Later on, after we had made our get-away, Red said: "Gee, I hope we didn't injure those bulls. They may have families."

That was all he ever said on the matter; but it showed his sense of fairness. He never blamed the bulls for doing their duty. To him it was all a game. He was ready to outwit them whenever he could, and he generally did; but he preferred to do it with brains, rather than violence. He was ready to fight at any moment; but now, when I look back, I realize that he never struck a man unless he was a skunk and deserved it; then he fought with every ounce of grit in him.

Later I saw Red arrested. He went away smiling, and, remembering his admonition, I kept hands off.

We had boarded a freight, thinking she was a "through" and would land us in Chicago before

evening. But at Joliet she was side-tracked. Joliet was well known as a "hostile" town. Common sense told us to keep under cover. But lying on an empty stomach beneath a box-car is anything but fun. Perhaps we could have stood it easier, and Red would have kept in hiding, if it hadn't been for a lunch wagon nearby which was filling the air with the smell of coffee and fried steak and onions.

"I'm going to get some Java and a sandwich," said Red. "You lie low, and I'll bring you a handout."

With that he swung to the ground and started across the tracks, and was nailed almost at once by two yard bulls. I could see them, but couldn't hear what they were saying. Red was smiling—he was always smiling; the bulls were frowning at first, but as they walked away one of them laughed at something Red said.

That was the last I saw of Red for many months. Just then the train pulled out. Lying there, I had a horrible sinking, lonesome feeling, but I dared not move. Red would probably get thirty days, but they might have sent me to the Ref for several years.

It was dark when we pulled into the junction at Blue Island. Stiff from my cramped position, tired and hungry, I crawled out, a forlorn and heartsick boy. I headed for the town, and slung my feet for food, then found a box-car on a siding half filled with straw and made a doss for the night.

I had no thoughts or aims for the future. With-

out Red I was like a ship without a rudder. For the first time in years I began to think of home. As long as Red had been with me I had been happy, and the Open Road was home; but now I felt terribly friendless and alone.

It was summer time, and we had been heading for the Great Lakes. I decided to go on to Chicago the next day and keep in that vicinity until Red should have served his time. With this thought I fell asleep.

Suddenly I became conscious of the car moving, and after an effort stirred myself and looked out. Darkness was all I could see. We were speeding through the night at about forty miles an hour. I hadn't the slightest idea where we were going, and really didn't care, so went back to my straw and was soon asleep, with the train rumbling along.

When I woke again the car was standing still, daylight was streaming through the doorway, and the sea of tracks told me we had pulled into Chicago. This was luck, for I had always found Chicago a friendly city. Here I decided to wait, in the hope that Red had talked himself free from the bulls and would join me.

But a hobo can never stay long in one place. He will soon become known to the police. After a week I decided it would be best to travel, and headed east. Now, when I look back, I believe it was thoughts of home, which came to me continually after Red had been taken away, that caused me to go east. I was drawing nearer to home, but with lagging steps. As

I went I left messages for Red at the source of information of all hoboes—the water tanks. No heart-sick lover or homesick wanderer ever penned a letter with deeper feelings than I when I scrawled my messages to Red on the dripping sides of tanks.

From Chicago to Toledo, then Cleveland, and on to Erie, I wrote my messages, and lingered and waited for Red, till the bulls began to spot me, then I moved on.

I was panning the main-drag of Erie when a hand like steel pulled me up short.

"Cut it out, Kid," said my captor. "That's no game for you."

"What the hell's it your business?" I kicked at his shins, and tried to squirm away; but the steel grip tightened.

"Got spunk," said another man, closing on my other side.

"What are you guys, fly cops?" I asked. Visions of a reformatory loomed before me. Since Red had told me about the Refs I had lived in dread of landing there.

"We'd oughta duck him for that insult," said the one who held me. "Kid, you've got a lot to learn. What would fly cops want with the likes of you?"

This hurt my pride. I considered myself a desperate outlaw. The temptation was strong to boast about the reward that was offered for the arrest of Red and me. Instead, I gritted my teeth and made another effort to squirm loose.

"Calm down, Kid! We're friends! Let's go to Mike's for a talk?"

They led me into the back room of a nearby saloon. There, while I ate a thick steak smothered in mushrooms, I bragged of lawless deeds on the Road. I had a keen desire to appear hard and dangerous before these fellows.

My talk seemed to amuse and please them. Their approving smiles told me that I was making a hit. Nearly two years on the Open Road, fighting a never-ending battle for subsistence had taught me to judge the reactions of men.

The tall, dark one who had caught me was called Bally. He had a humorous, reckless, handsome face, with square-cut features. His linen was clean, and his clothes well-pressed. The other man was called Squint. He was shorter and heavier built, with a fair complexion, and a slight cast in one of his blue eyes that gave the impression of a friendly wink. Like Bally he was neatly dressed.

Bally shoved a handful of money across the table to me. The money didn't give me a particular thrill; but the hand that passed it did. It was a neat, well-shaped, well-manicured hand, sensitive, almost feminine; yet my arm still felt the clutch of those seemingly delicate fingers.

Fascinated, my eyes followed the hand as it withdrew.

"The kid's observant," laughed Squint.

"Yep, got the makings of a leader."

"Going to adopt him as your heir, make him crown prince, eh?"

"Maybe. We'll try him out, and see what he's made of."

The flattery of their remarks appealed to my vanity; also my curiosity, which has always been paramount, and has often brought me to the brink of disaster, as it did on this occasion. I was ready to follow these handsome strangers on any wild scheme they might suggest.

"Kid, you stick to Bally, and you'll have the world by the tail." Squint did most of the talking. Bally, like a real leader, was close-mouthed, keen-eyed, and wide-awake.

"I'm game for anything that's got kick in it!" I boasted.

"Well, come on. We'll show you real life. No more panhandling. If you run with us, you've got to play the game big." Bally rose and led the way to a shack on the outskirts of town.

This was my introduction to the famous Lake Shore Gang, bank robbers and train hold-ups. There were a dozen others gathered in the shack, and I could see immediately that Bally was their leader. He walked among them with an air of calm superiority, and they showed him deference. Bally was a cracksman superlative. When a big job, such as getting into the vaults of a bank, was to be pulled off, it was Bally's sensitive fingers that worked the combinations. It was Bally's brain that led the gang

with such success that to-day most of their robberies remain unsolved.

The gang dubbed me "Crown Prince", and this monnicker stuck to me until, like many another prince who sought power, I landed in jail.

Of all the gang only Michigan resented my being with them. He was one of the cleverest and most daring, and was openly jealous of Bally's leadership.

"What's the idea of bringing a damned kid in here?" asked Michigan of no one in particular. "If the bulls get him, he'll squeal. I'll cut his damned throat if he squeals on me!"

"You'll cut out that talk!" Bally stepped close to Michigan, and the two men glared at each other. "I brought him here. If you want to cut any throats, try cutting mine."

"I ain't no squealer," I said. "If the gang's afraid, I'll beat it before I have anything to tell."

This made a hit, and the gang voiced its sentiments against my leaving. Michigan found himself a lone minority in his objections. This didn't make him any the more friendly to me, and I felt that I had made an enemy.

There was something big under foot. The gang was seeing to its tools and weapons. They oiled and polished pistols, tested torchlights, and examined skeleton keys. Watching these activities I felt a glow of pride. These fellows were the real thing. Their talk also made me feel superior to the common hobo.

They spoke in contempt of the fellows who played for small stakes.

Frisco Tommy showed me how to handle a gun, how to make a quick draw and cock the hammer at the same time. Squint explained the keys to me, and gave me a demonstration in a lock on one of the doors of the shack. Spanish gave an exhibition of knife throwing. Lefty unwound a silk rope ladder from around his slender waist, and showed me how to scale the wall of a house by climbing from window to window. To me it was more exciting than a Western melodrama, and more fun than a three-ring circus.

Only Bally and Michigan had nothing to show me. Bally was busy working on diagrams that looked like architect's plans. Michigan was sulking by himself.

Soon the inevitable poker game was in progress. Here again these fellows were superior. They played for real money. No nickels, dimes or quarters had place in that game; nothing less than a half dollar was considered. Pots went up over a hundred dollars. It made me ashamed to think that that very day I had been panning for dimes.

Sleep got the best of me, and when Bally pointed to a pile of straw and told me to doss down, I could hardly keep my eyes open.

When I woke up the shack was empty, and I thought that it had all been a dream. But the money Bally had given me was in my pocket. Perhaps the

gang had decided to shake me. This thought filled me with humiliation. Maybe they thought I wasn't plucky enough, or hadn't enough sense to run with them. I determined to do something real daring alone—rob a bank or hold up a train; something that would make my standing as an outlaw unquestioned. But in the meantime I was hungry, and started out to get breakfast. Then my dreams began to come true.

"Mornin', Prince!" The door opened and in walked Frisco Tommy, with an armful of bundles. "You're the champion sleeper."

He dumped the bundles at my feet. "A present from the gang," he said. "Get into them and let's see how they fit."

I opened the bundles and found a complete outfit, from tan shoes to jaunty checkered cap. The sort of an outfit to appeal to a live boy. I didn't know what to say, and said nothing, but kneeled on the floor before the gang's gift, like a Hindu before his idol.

"After breakfast," said Tommy, "we'll get your mop trimmed."

"Where's Bally and the gang?" I sputtered with excitement, as I dressed.

"Gone to Cleveland to do a job," was the laconic reply. "The bulls there know my mug, so Bally counted me out."

"Gee! Why didn't he take me along?"

"Thought you hadn't had enough experience.

This is a big haul they're going to make, and a bit risky."

I asked more questions, but Tommy suddenly became discreetly silent.

"We're going to Philadelphia to-day," he changed the subject.

My new friends had not changed my loyalty to Red. I felt proud to belong to this famous outlaw gang, and wanted Red to share my glory.

"If we go to Philly," I said, "my pal will miss me when he comes out from doing his stretch. We agreed to hang around the Lakes."

Tommy smiled, my loyalty pleased him.

"Don't worry about Red. Bally has sent out word all along the Lakes, and as soon as he turns up he'll be told where to find you.

"This gang has a debt to Red. He used to work with us. He got pinched, and the judge offered to let him off, if he'd squeal; but he kept mum, and did his time. The gang hasn't forgot that."

"Is Bally coming down to Philly?"

"No, we're coming back here, after we've established an alibi for the gang."

We went to Philly, where Tommy conferred with certain saloonkeepers and fences; then we went to Trenton, and back to Erie. Here we met Squint, who told us that the job had been a success, and that the gang had gone to Warren.

I had been in Warren before and knew the regular hobo jungle there, but the Lake Shore Gang

had a jungle of their own, where common hoboes knew better than to go. There we found Bally and about twenty others. They were all in high spirits, except Michigan, who was sore over his share of the haul.

A delivery truck brought out two kegs of beer, a case of whisky, half a dozen roast turkeys and all the trimmings. We had a grand banquet on the grass under the trees, and most of the crowd got gloriously lit.

Around midnight a steady rain commenced to fall; so we all stumbled across the railroad and climbed into a box-car.

Soon the car was filled with the snores and heavy breathing of men deep in drunken sleep. Bally had forbidden me to drink, and had given me fifty dollars, which was more money than I had ever handled at one time in my life, and made me feel like a millionaire. I felt that this was tangible evidence that I had landed with the right sort of fellows. I was too excited to sleep, and lay wide awake, dreaming of a time when I would be trusted to take part in a big bank robbery or the hold-up of a train. I had read every word of the newspaper accounts of the Cleveland robbery over and over again. It thrilled me. This was real life. But it was holding up trains that I meant to specialize in.

The squeaking of a door being rolled back made me sit up in my dark corner. I saw Michigan climb in with his arms full of something that looked like

rags. He jammed this material into the lining of the car; then struck a match and lighted it. It was oil-soaked waste, and burst into a blue flame.

I shook Bally and pointed to Michigan.

Bally's pistol cracked and Michigan crumpled to the floor with a bullet in his head.

The shot brought the more sober ones to their feet. In a moment the car was blazing. Then we, who were able, dragged the helplessly drunk outside. We all got burns; but we continued to work until the bulls and the fire engines appeared. Then we scattered, leaving four drunks on the ground.

Michigan was burned to a cinder in the fire he had made to destroy his pals, and the police never knew that he had first been shot.

In the scrimmage for safety I stuck to Bally. He led me through the woods and across fields till we were both exhausted and daylight was breaking. All day we lay in a thicket. I had over fifty dollars in my pocket, and Bally had several thousand; yet we were hungry. When darkness came Bally sent me in to a nearby town to buy food and a paper.

Now, with my greater knowledge of what arrest would mean to me, I had a terrible fear of the bulls; also the old glamour of being hunted for was wearing off, and I was beginning to regard the police as persecutors who interfered with my chosen mode of life.

I entered the town with shaky knees, and was thankful for the new clothes the gang had given me.

First I bought some food, and the grocer treated me with a respect that somewhat helped my courage to return. He must have thought that I belonged to some family that had recently moved into his neighborhood.

Next I bought a newspaper, and its glaring headlines struck terror into my heart, and sent me running to the safety of darkness and the open country. One of the drunks had squealed, and the paper announced that posses were out, and that the Cleveland bank robbers were sure to be captured within the next few hours. It also mentioned me. I had been seen by the yard bulls running from the fire, and the squealer had told the police about me.

Throwing his coat over his head, Bally lit a candle and read the account slowly through.

"Warren is the safest place for us, Kid," he said. "That's where we were last seen running from. If we can double back, and get through the cordon, we can lie low there till this flurry is over."

That night we crept and crawled through the woods and fields, the country alive with armed deputies, who beat the bushes and searched everywhere. The Cleveland bank had offered a large reward for the capture of the robbers. By the time we reached our jungle on the outskirts of Warren my beautiful new clothes were dirty and torn. Tired and footsore, we crawled into camp, and found several others there, who had made the same deductions we had.

It was a beautiful Sunday morning in September.

Spanish was doing picket duty half a mile down the road. Suddenly the stillness was broken by the distant baying of hounds.

"Sounds like the Dago with his dogs," said Bally. "If it is, some one is going to get caught."

The Dago was an Italian detective, who kept a pack of bloodhounds and was well known to the underworld.

Bally gave us each a route to follow in case his surmise was right, and he had hardly finished giving us instructions when Spanish ran into camp.

"Beat it!" he yelled. "The Dago's coming with his hounds and a posse of twenty deputies!"

I jumped to my feet, as the crowd scattered, and ran down to the river as Bally had told me to do.

He had told me that the dogs wouldn't hurt me as long as I didn't try to fight them, or run away once they had surrounded me, still I was scared stiff. I ran till I was exhausted, terror drove me till I collapsed, and every step I took I could hear the dogs drawing nearer. Suddenly they were around me. My feet went all to pieces, and I stumbled and fell.

Grabbing two big rocks, as I lay on the ground, I staggered to my feet, and backed up to a fallen tree, and climbed its trunk. Then I waited in terror, while the ugly brutes, with their bloodshot eyes and slavering mouths, howled around me.

Soon I heard men talking in whispers, and there was a crackling of underbrush as the posse closed in around with drawn pistols. It sure was rich! They

thought they had rounded up a gang of desperadoes, and found they had netted only a half-grown boy.

I tried to tell them that my home was in Irvineton, and that I had come down to the river to take a swim; but the Dago was too wise, and had too much faith in his dogs. So he took me back to Warren, while the rest of the posse went in search of bigger game, which they didn't get.

On the way into Warren we had to stop at a railroad crossing for a freight to go by. She was hitting a good clip, but I knew I could make her. The Dago's pistol was sticking out from the holster on his hip. The thought flashed through my mind to grab his gun, plug him, and hop the freight. I snatched the pistol half out of the holster; then with one hand he grabbed the butt, and gave me a clout on the ear with the other. I staggered back, beaten; and thought of facing a jury on trial for attempted murder. Then the Dago looked at me and smiled.

"You'll end your days on the gallows," he said, and into his eyes there came a look of pity. That Dago was a real man, and I hope to meet him again some day. He locked me up, and left me storming and cursing. Twice, as he walked away, he turned and looked at me pityingly, and later I learned that he was a real friend.

About ten o'clock that night the Chief of Police came in to talk to me, and for several hours we chatted before a warm fire, which he built in the jail stove, for the night had turned cold.

I refused to tell him anything about the gang, and, to my surprise, he seemed to appreciate my loyalty; for, after one attempt, he changed the subject and commenced talking about me and my plans for the future. He didn't preach to me, but somehow he made me see that I was on the wrong trail. For the first time in two years I told the truth about myself and my family connections; I even gave him my real name.

He told me that he knew I was telling the truth.

"You're not really bad," he said, "you just love adventure. But running with yeggs and hoboes isn't the best way to get it. If you'll promise me you'll go straight home, I'll see the judge, and arrange to have you go free, without a charge being entered against you."

It was four o'clock in the morning when I gave my word to go straight home; then we shook hands on it, and he left, telling me to get some sleep, and not to worry.

Nothing short of death would have stopped me from keeping that promise. When, after taking me to a restaurant and giving me a good breakfast, he said good-by, I started for New York by the shortest and quickest route I could go.

Three days later I walked into my home for the first time in two years. Then, for the next three months, I fought the hardest moral fight of my life; but I was beaten in the end. The lure of the Open Road still clung to me, and it has really never left

me, though I managed in later years to rise somehow above the rôle of an ordinary tramp, and became a tramp superlative, with the whole world for a tramping ground.

CHAPTER 3

A Camp Hanger-On

TWO years of unbridled freedom on the Open Road had wrought a great change in me, a change I was wholly unconscious of until I returned home and attempted to settle down to the humdrum of civilized life. My people talked to me of school, but the very thought of it filled me with repulsion. Imagine, if you can, my bowing to the will of some crusty, narrow-minded school teacher. No, school for me was out. For a time I loafed through my days aimlessly, enjoying in a degree the doubtful admiration of friends of the family who made special calls at my home to view and talk with the boy who had wandered for two years over the country alone.

These smug people were careful to keep their own boys and girls away from me. My mother often attempted to get associates for me among the "nice" boys of her circle.

"I want George to meet Johnny," she would say.

And Johnny's mother would reply: "Yes, he certainly must." Then she would give a dozen alibis for our not meeting at the present.

I found myself very much alone, until I made

friends on the street corners, which is never hard to do. But even here I had nothing in common with boys of my own age; their talk and ambitions, if any, tired me.

For a time work proved a solace. I got a job as a messenger for a publishing house. But this soon palled on me. There were several other boys working there, all older than me in years, but infants in experience. They kow-towed to the office manager, and became sniveling curs in his presence. The office manager was a tyrant with those under him, but in turn a sniveling cur in the presence of the general manager and the president. This disgusted me. To think that I was supposed to cringe before a man, who himself cringed before others. It was too much for my independence, and one day when he attempted to bawl me out for some trivial thing I told him to "go to hell", picked up my hat and walked out.

After that I got several jobs, but held none of them for any length of time. No one found fault with my work—no one ever has; but they never could extract homage from me, and that seems to be the chief desire of the little big men in New York's great army of ink-slingers.

It was a bitter, losing fight; but my promise to the Chief of Police of Warren held me. In spite of my lawlessness I had a rigid code, and a promise was sacred. I won't say that I would have kept that promise forever, if I hadn't met Red; but meeting

him broke down the final barrier of my resistance.

My mother took me to Hammerstein's Theater, and induced me to wear formal dress for the occasion. The play bored me, and after the second act I stepped outside to smoke and watch the procession of Broadway.

"Hello, Kid." Red greeted me as nonchalantly as if we had parted that day. "Keeping the straight and narrow path, eh?"

He looked at my first evening clothes, and smiled with his baffling, quizzical smile.

"Gee, Red! I'm glad to see you!" I grabbed his hand, and clung to it. He radiated the spirit of the Open Road. The rumbling freights, the thundering limiteds raced before me in maddening succession. The smell of Java in the jungle, the freedom, the bigness of it all were calling.

We talked and talked.

"You're missing the show, Kid."

"To hell with the show! Tell me about the Road. What was your stretch in Joliet?"

"Thirty days. I nearly talked myself free, but the bulls were under orders."

"Did you see Bally, and Squint, and Frisco Tommy?"

"Yep, saw them all. They knew you'd gone home, and they're all glad. Stay home, Kid. The Road's all wrong. It never leads anywhere, it just goes on and on to nowhere."

"Which way you heading, Red?"

"Florida, I guess, till spring."

"Gee, I'm going with you." I looked at the theater, then at my evening clothes. The thought of hopping a freight in them made me laugh, but I didn't care.

"Oh, here you are," my mother caught me by the shoulder. "The end of the play was very funny; too bad you missed it."

I looked around for Red, but he had melted into the crowd.

That night I fought my last losing skirmish in my fight to keep my promise to the Chief of Police. Finally I temporized and eased my conscience by telling myself that I promised him I would go home, but had not promised him I'd stay there, and the next day I was following the birds south.

The West Coast of Florida was a favorite haunt of Red's in winter. I knew that if I stayed around there long enough I would find him. So I got work with a cattle man and orange grower. This fellow had extensive orange groves near Arcadia, and ranged about ten thousand head of cattle on the Big Prairie. Here was work that had sufficient novelty and kick in it to hold my interest for several months. I loved horses, and to be able to ride day after day and herd cattle appealed to my fancy.

I had left messages for Red on water tanks from Jacksonville to Punta Gorda, and whenever I spotted a hobo near the railroad I would give him a message to pass on to Red. At times I would be out on the Prairie for three or four weeks at a stretch.

When I returned from these trips I would always inspect the nearest water tank for word from Red, but none ever came, and I began to think my pal had deserted me; for I felt certain that he had learned of my whereabouts. Then one day I was riding in from the range, and there, sitting on a pile of cross-ties, was Red.

"Hello, Kid. Did you know there's a war on?" Red's greeting, as always, was casual.

I sprang from my horse and ran to him. "You old son-of-a-gun, why didn't you come before?"

He laughed at my enthusiasm. "They're sorter fussy in jails about a fellow going out," he said.

"What! you got another stretch, Red?"

"Yep, sixty days this trip."

"Gee!"

"That's the Road, Kid. A fellow just lives with the shadow of the jail always streaming across his path." There was a far-away look in his eyes, and for a second I got a glimpse of Red's soul.

It was the first time I had seen him show sentiment, and I wanted to sympathize with him; but was afraid that if I did he might think I was prying into his private affairs, and, well, the Road has a rigid code in that respect.

"Which way you heading?" I asked.

"Tampa." He pulled himself up with a jerk, as if to shake off something unpleasant, and his old reckless smile came back. "I'm going to have a crack at the greasers."

"You mean you're going to join the army and go to Cuba?"

"That's it."

"Then, me too!"

It was a week later that we hit Tampa, and wandered about in its confusion. Troops were coming and going; but there seemed to be no chance for enlistment. This was a port of embarkation; all regiments passing through were supposed to be full strength and trained.

Red finally enlisted as a teamster; but the recruiting officer merely laughed at my attempt to join up. This didn't stop me from sticking to my pal. For about three weeks I slept in Red's wagon, shared his meals and helped him tend his mules. Within twenty-four hours of his enlisting he had robbed the commissary of a complete uniform for me; so that my presence around the teams created little attention.

Orders came for Red's outfit to go across, and the loading of teams and wagons on transports commenced. Red had a plan to get me across, and it nearly worked. I drove onto the wharf in his wagon, and helped with the loading of the mules: then he covered me over with a tarpaulin in the wagon, and I lay very quiet, waiting to be hoisted on board.

"Come out of that!" A keen-eyed embarkation officer had found me, and pulled the tarpaulin aside.

"Aw, gee!" I blurted. "My pal's going across."

"I admire your pluck, youngster; but it can't be done," he said, and smiled. Then he called an M. P.

and told him to put me outside the gates of the wharf.

I saw Red looking at me as I was marched away, but I dared not say anything for fear of getting him in trouble. Outside the gates I waited, hoping some chance would come to get on board the transport. But the sentries had been told to keep me out. Finally I decided to get across by some other ship.

After that I became a regular camp hanger-on, attaching myself to various regiments, and staying with them till they went over. Twice more I attempted to smuggle on board a transport, and was caught. The last time the embarkation officer threatened me with prison if I attempted it again.

Realizing that I had become known in Tampa, I left there and hopped freights for Jacksonville. Then, before I could get my bearings, the war was over.

My attempts to smuggle to Cuba had aroused in me a longing for the sea. Day after day I had watched with envy the transports sailing, and my heart had gone out with each. After hanging around the docks for several days I got a job washing dishes on board one of the Clyde steamers. Truly this was an ignoble job; but there was a port hole over the sink in which I worked, and through it I got a sight of the harbor as we sailed down the St. John's River, and I was finally able to look out over the wide expanse of ocean. This gave me a new thrill, and I enjoyed the smell of the sea air, even if it was

strongly mixed with the odors of dish-water and slops. I have had many long ocean voyages since those first three days on the coast; but none of them has given me the same pleasure.

CHAPTER 4

The Texas Kid

THE lure of the Open Road had me again; but this third trip out it carried me farther afield. It was March, I had been working up and down the coast on the Clyde ships, and had tired of it, and once more had made an effort to settle down and live like any other normal person. For a couple of months I loafed at home, holding a job for a few days at a time. School was out of the question, and the petty humors of an office manager were unbearable; also a white collar seemed to choke me.

At four o'clock of the morning of the eighth of March I sailed out of the Erie Basin on the *Sabine*, a tramp of the Union Line, destined for the African ports. She was caked with ice, and the first job I did was to scatter sand over the decks to keep the crew from slipping. When I carried coffee up on the bridge I heard the captain say to the pilot: "This weight of ice would turn us over if we weren't so heavy-laden."

Five days later we were working in our shirt-sleeves, and had stretched canvas over the bridge to keep off the sun.

The Union boats were black, with red and black funnels, and white trimmings on the deck houses, companion ladders, etc. They had given the *Sabine's* hull a fresh coat of black while in port, and as soon as the weather cleared had dolled up her decks with white. She was a handsome ship, and I was proud to be even the junior member of her crew.

"Hey, you young devil,"—the bos'n was hard-boiled—"heave that bucket of paint over the side."

I knew he meant me, because that had become his favorite way of addressing me. It was a bucket of white, left over from the trimmings. Now on the Clyde boats I had worked in the pantry, mostly "pearl diving," and was almost as ignorant of the sea as a land-lubber; but a rope-end across my seat a few times had taught me to move when the bos'n spoke.

We were a little forward of midships. I grabbed the bucket and heaved it over the nearest bulwark; then a swift kick in the pants made me realize that I had done the wrong thing.

"You damned ignorant little son-of-a-swab." The bos'n had me by the collar. "What in hell's bloody name do you mean by heavin' it over the weather?"

"Huh?" I gasped, "the weather?" This didn't mean a thing to me. But I have never forgotten that lesson of the difference between the weather and the lee side of a ship. The bos'n was a great instructor.

"Make a sling and lower him over the side," he ordered a deck hand.

The sailors were laughing, and in my terror I looked up toward the bridge; there stood the skipper and the second mate grinning as if they were sitting in front seats at a show.

They made a "bos'n's sling," which was a half-inch rope tied around my thighs, and then around my waist. While the *Sabine* plowed through the gulf stream under a tropic sun, I was lowered over the side, and a bucket of lye water and a swab were let down beside me. Then the crew laughed their fill while I scrubbed the splashes of white off the ship's black side. It took over three hours to do, and the agony of that bos'n's sling is still fresh in my memory.

The two sailors holding the rope by which I hung couldn't resist the temptation to let it slip occasionally, and duck me in the ocean. But, after my first fright, I didn't mind the duckings, because the water cooled my burning seat, which the sling seemed to be cutting in two.

For a week after this drastic lesson I stood up at all times, except when I crawled into my bunk; then I lay down on my stomach.

That bos'n was one of the squarest men I have ever known. He acted on the level always; but many were the thrashings he gave me in the months I was on board the *Sabine*. The last time he thrashed me was when I went ashore at East London on the African coast with a dirty face. But at all times he was my friend, and helped me out of several difficulties,

the worst of which was my scrap with the third engineer.

This fellow was a slovenly skunk, who had to be called repeatedly before he could be wakened when it is his turn to go on watch. One of my jobs was to call him and give him a cup of coffee just before eight bells. For the first few weeks I took his thick-headed sleepiness as a joke, and got a lot of fun out of waking him. He would sit up and talk to me, and I would put the cup of coffee into his hand; then, when I returned a few minutes later, I would find him fast asleep, and the coffee cold. Sometimes I would torment him and get him to chase me from his cabin, so as to be sure he was awake.

But he didn't appreciate my crude kindness. Sleep seemed to be his chief aim in life, and I believe he got to hate me because I was the one who always pulled him out of his dreams. He became surly and insulting, and a mutual hatred grew between us. Maybe the tropic heat had something to do with it.

"I ain't going to call you but once and once only," I warned him.

For several mornings after that he got up in silence when I called him. He had made up his mind that he was not going to be under obligations to me. But one morning he slept and slept late. The chief engineer hailed him up on the carpet before the skipper. Then, to shield himself, he swore I hadn't called him; and I had no way to prove I had. When I protested that I had he said I was lying. This made

my blood boil. All I could do there in the captain's cabin was to give him a dirty look; but I brooded over it all that day, and finally went to sleep that night still brooding over it.

During the night we ran into a squall and the next morning we were riding in a heavy roll. I took a cup of coffee, that was none too hot, and put it on the engineer's locker; then, in a voice loud enough to be heard on the fo'c'sle head, I called him once. He sat up and blinked at me as I slammed out on deck.

In a few minutes I returned and found him sleeping soundly.

Watching my chance for the roll of the ship, I grabbed the inside of his mattress and dumped him from the top bunk onto the hard deck.

"Wake up, you lazy, dirty liar!" I said, and slammed out of the cabin.

To call a man a "dirty liar" was enough to make him fight, but also to dump him on a hard deck while he was sound asleep was enough to make him commit murder.

I had reached the after deck when there was a snarl from behind, and I turned to see the engineer charging at me. In a flash the old fighting instinct of the Road came back. There was a mop standing in a bucket of water on the deck. The bucket landed on the engineer's head, and I smashed the mop across his shoulder. I remember among other things the top of a rain-barrel that stood beside the galley; this I split over his head also, and for a moment he was

stunned. Then we mixed, and I was getting the worst of it. He was a man thirty years of age. I was a boy of fourteen.

Suddenly I heard the bos'n's voice say: "Hold that young devil!" and strong arms gripped me.

Then, straining to get free from my captors, through battered eyelids I saw the bos'n mixing it with the engineer. He was fairly wiping the deck with him. Finally he slammed him in a heap against the galley.

"Don't you touch that boy again," he said, "or I'll rough-handle you! You dirty son-of-a-swab, hitting a kid!"

In a few minutes my eyes had swollen shut, and I had to be led to my bunk, where the bos'n bathed my battered face, and swore vengeance against the engineer. Two weeks later, when the swelling finally went out of my face, the bridge of my nose was flat, and I had a beautifully ugly pug. For several years I was a hard-looking character. I carried the marks of that fight till a surgeon in Nashville, Tennessee, performed a successful operation on my nose and gave me a fairly decent beak again.

At Cape Town I went ashore with the bos'n and Chips. Everywhere they were talking of war. The Boers were arming. Whispered tales of smuggled guns were plentiful. Sailors, who had come down the coast from Delagoa Bay, told of seeing huge Krupps being landed in the Portuguese Territory for shipment to the Transvaal.

I came near jumping ship that night, and would have, had it not been for an argument between a couple of trekkers, whom everybody regarded with awe and respect. These fellows made trips far into the interior, and were supposed to know the truth of what was going on up country.

"Ain't no chance of there being trouble down here," said one.

"That's where you're wrong," the other retorted. "Oom Paul is out to capture the seaports. That old devil has ambitions for a navy, and if the bloody British don't watch out, he'll get it too."

"You're right about him wantin' a navy, but he ain't coming to Cape Town for it, not when he's got the Natal ports so handy. That's where the fighting is going to be, up around Durban."

The argument went on for some time, till finally both agreed that Natal would be the chief battle ground. We were under orders for Port Natal, and I thrilled at the thought. I had been dished out of getting into the Spanish-American war on account of my age; but I made up my mind that when this scrap came I would be there to take a hand. So I did some deep scheming as we plowed up the coast.

The first night in Port Natal I went ashore and got the lay of the land; then made my plans. I knew of a couple of others of the crew who intended to jump ship; but they were talking too much. I decided to play my own game, and took no one into my confidence, except a seedy beach-comber, who,

through terror of the impending war, was anxious to get out of the country.

"You want to ship, hey?" I said, when he had asked about vacancies in the crew. "There ain't no vacancies now; but, if you'll help me, without talking, there'll be a vacancy in the morning."

This fellow was a skunk, and ordinarily I wouldn't have trusted him; but I saw that he was so afraid of getting roped into a war, he would do most anything to get away. So I arranged for him to come aboard the next day and carry my duffle ashore, which he could do without raising suspicion.

I didn't want to land in a strange country broke; and my few belongings would bring something at a second-hand store. By eight o'clock that night I had disposed of most of them, and by midnight I was riding the bumper of the coal-tender on the night "passenger" from Durban to Pietermaritzburg.

Hoboes are rare in Africa, and train hands don't watch for them as they do in America. With little trouble I held her down to the end of the run. It was a tedious journey, and took most of the night to accomplish. Then the railroads were not so good in Natal as they are now, and at times the train seemed to go no faster than a man can walk. She puffed and panted up the steep grades, then went cautiously down the other side with a grinding and screeching of brakes.

A few days after I reached 'Maritzburg the war scare died down. My money was gone, and I found

myself up against a real problem. There was no unskilled labor for white people in Africa; this was all done by natives, and by coolies brought from India. I had no trade, and very little education. My earnestness and insistence got me several jobs, but I was unable to hold any of them, because of my lack of knowledge of the native language and the country.

Panhandling was dangerous. Arrest would have meant my having to explain how I had got into the country, and I would probably have been deported. I listened eagerly for news of the war, and cursed with disappointment at its delay. During three days I had eaten only one skimpy meal a day. I had been sleeping in hedges, and any place where the police were not likely to find me. Then I got a job with another fellow papering and painting a house. This chap had been an Oxford Blue, and later, when the war finally came, he held a commission as a colonel in the British Army; but right then he was glad to hang wall paper for a few shillings a day, and like me he was homeless.

While we were on this job, which lasted nearly a month, Johnson and I slept in the house in which we were working, making a bed of shavings covered with old sacks. We cooked our meals on the kitchen range in tin cans and a piece of tin roofing, which we had bent into a sort of frying pan. Those were happy days, days of opulence, in which my pockets jingled with real money. Johnson, my partner, was true blue. He was a born gentleman, and played the

game like a man. We became good pals. He too was waiting patiently, or rather impatiently, for the war to come. Johnson had a past; he had held a captaincy in India. This I learned from other people. But I treated him as the Road had taught me to treat all men, just taking them as I found them, and leaving their past sacred to them. I believe it was this chiefly that made Johnson like me.

But the painting job came to an end, and I soon went broke. Several times hunger almost drove me to panhandling; but fear of deportation and of missing the war kept me from it. The war scare kept coming and going. I got to know a number of other drifters like myself who were hanging on till the racket started, and every one was certain that it would start. If I could just manage to keep going; but every day the fear of deportation haunted me. The capital was only a main street town after all, and I was becoming too well known.

Out on the edge of town a man named Warren was training polo ponies to sell to the British officers. He had a ranch up in the Transvaal from which he shipped unbroken Boer colts, which were sure-footed and made splendid polo mounts. I went out to his paddock to see if there was anything doing there. Here I found all the work being done by natives. His riders were Hottentots, and some of them were pretty fair; but it really didn't require an expert to handle a Boer pony, which hasn't got a real buck in it, compared with our American bronchos.

Leaning over the paddock fence I watched the operations. They were trying to break a gray of rather unusual good qualities. Warren had sold him on condition that he would deliver him ready for polo practice. The pony was bringing a good price, and the buyer was in a hurry to get him.

My experience with horses told me that this pony could fight; immediately I became interested, and for the time being I forgot that I was hungry.

The Hottentot gathered the reins, stuck a foot in the stirrup, and swung lightly aboard. For a moment he sat there, and, I must say, his seat was rather graceful. The gray drew back on his haunches, shook his head, swayed first to one side then to the other; then suddenly drew all four feet together and jack-knifed. The Hottentot spread his arms and legs like a fancy diver, and sailed through the air. But he was game, and before the gray had settled down to earth, he was up and on his back again. Again the pony swerved and jack-knifed, and again the Hottentot went sprawling over his head.

I learned afterward that this pony was the worst outlaw they had ever had in Warren's paddock. Seven times he dumped the Hottentot. Warren was getting wild. None of the other riders would tackle the gray, and the Hottentot was clearly out-matched. Warren could see good money going off into the blue every time the gray dumped his rider. But the Hottentot was game to the last. Finally he swung aboard with lips set and a determination to stay there, but

barely got seated when he was catapulted into a pile of manure. This was too much for me, and I laughed.

"What in the hell are you laughing at?" asked Warren.

"Laughing at the nigger getting chucked," I giggled.

"Well, shut up! You've got no right to laugh! You can't ride!"

"Who the hell said I couldn't ride?"

"I'll give you a pound if you stay on that horse two minutes!"

"You will?" I was on top of the fence.

"Yes! I'll give you two pounds!"

"That's a go!" I leaped into the paddock and almost ran to the pony, which was standing with sprawled legs and heaving sides.

"Hey! You young fool! get away from there! You'll get killed!"

"What are you, a four-flusher?" I sneered. "Afraid of losing your money?"

Warren's face turned red. "Go on and break your damned neck!"

I gathered up the reins and swung into the saddle. The horse was tired, but I was fresh, and herding cattle on American bronchos had taught me something of riding. For half an hour we fought over the lot, which we soon had to ourselves. Though I was out of practice, and weak for want of food, I managed to stick him. With two pounds I could live a long time, perhaps until the war came.

"Have I earned my money?" I asked Warren, as the pony, now in a lather, stood with drooping head and spraddled legs.

"Yes, by gad, you've more than earned it! Where do you come from? Where'd you learn to ride?"

"America!" I said, with pride.

I had dismounted now and was petting the gray, which was trembling with nervous fright.

"He's got good stuff in him," I said. "With careful handling, he'll be a world-beater."

"You're one of those Texas Kids, eh?" said Warren, handing me two golden sovereigns, and beaming at me.

I had never been in Texas, but from then on I was known as the "Texas Kid."

"What will you charge to ride for me?" asked Warren.

"I'll take 'em unbroken and ride for a pound a time."

"That's a bargain. I've got a black here that I'd like you to ride tomorrow."

I spent most of that two pounds rigging myself out to look like a real Texas Kid. I had a pair of Mexican spurs that my father had given me, which I prized highly, and instead of selling had pawned; these I redeemed. Chaps were not known in Africa and were therefore unobtainable, but I bought a pair of wide-cut moleskin trousers, a silk shirt, a large silk handkerchief, and a felt hat with the widest brim I could find. Later, when I had made more money,

I added a zambok, a rhinoceros hide whip, to my outfit.

With spurs clanking, and silk handkerchief and trousers flapping, I swaggered into Warren's paddock the next morning. Nearly a hundred people had gathered to see me ride, and perhaps I wasn't enjoying my importance. To be suddenly lifted from almost starving to a sort of popular hero was enough to turn the head of any boy.

My horning into Warren's paddock was the beginning of three years of adventure and wild life. Twice a day I rode unbroken horses. I was drawing from ten to twelve pounds a week, sixty dollars, which was a princely salary for a fourteen-year-old boy. But I didn't save a penny. Every day large crowds gathered to see me ride, and after a pony had learned that he couldn't throw me, I would ride him through the town. This was vanity on my part, for wherever I rode I saw people turn and look with admiration of my daring.

At night men would gather round me in the public houses and stand me drinks to get me to talk about the wild and woolly West. I talked plenty, making up my stories as I went. Whenever they asked me why I had left America, as nearly every one did, I would tell them that the police were after me for a shooting scrape I had taken part in, in which a couple of men had been killed.

Through it all I maintained an air of being hard-boiled. I became notorious. People pointed to me as

I clanked along the streets. My riding, which was really not so great, was attracting a lot of attention. Soon I felt that I had to do something real wild and desperate to uphold the rôle I had assumed. I was drinking heavily, and would probably have come to a bad end, if the war hadn't taken me away from it all.

My chance to prove my daring recklessness came one evening when I was drinking with a crowd in the "King's Arms." A man named Bryan came up to me and asked me if I would ride a bad horse he owned.

"I'm riding for Warren," I said. "See him, and if he says O. K., then I'll ride anything you've got."

At this the crowd gathered closer. The horse he wanted me to ride was well-known; it was the colt of a mustang stallion that had been shipped out to Africa for breeding purposes. His mustang blood had given him a bad reputation, and people were afraid of him. He had many of the traits of our Western ponies, and had thrown one man and nearly trampled him to death before he could be driven off.

The King's Arms was a rendezvous for Africa's gambling sports, and that night there were a number present. In a few minutes they had made up a purse of twenty-five pounds for me, if I rode and mastered the mustang. Then the betting started, and hundreds of pounds were wagered for and against my riding. I took a bet of ten pounds on the issue myself; then the gamblers offered odds in my favor.

It was a great evening. Warren was found and he agreed to my riding for Bryan; also he took a heavy wager in my favor, which caused the odds to increase. The glamour of it all was too much for me. I began drinking heavily. My backers tried to stop me and make me go to bed, but I was unreasonable and refused to be dictated to. Then the odds turned against me, and the drunker I got the heavier the betting was that I wouldn't be able to stick the mustang. I got angry and wagered every penny I could lay hands on. Men gave me odds of five to one against my staying on the mustang five minutes.

Those betting against me were trying to keep me up, and kept shoving the drinks to me. The others were trying to get me away. There were fights and near-fights. I became the center of a riot that brought the police in, and several arrests were made. It was two o'clock in the morning when they carried me upstairs and put me to bed. I was dead to the world and knew nothing of what was going on; but they told me afterward that my backers stood guard over me all night. I know they were there in the morning. They woke me at half-past eight, and had a couple of Turkish bath rubbers there to get me in shape. I was rubbed and pummeled, given hot and cold plunges, and filled with coffee and whisky, and made to eat a hearty breakfast.

By ten o'clock, the time set for the ride, I felt equal to anything. What with the stimulants and the glamour I felt like a superman. I believe that at the

moment that I swaggered into Bryan's paddock, around which nearly a thousand people had gathered, I would have tackled anything, I was so pepped up with Dutch courage.

Bryan's paddock lay at the far end of Longmarket Street, which is Pietermaritzburg's main thoroughfare. It runs the length of the city, crosses the railroad, and leads up into Fort Napier, which at that time, on account of the war scare, was prohibited to all except those having official business there.

There was a suppressed calm of excitement as two terrified Kaffirs led out the mustang, his eyes flashing and his nostrils snorting. He was a rangy, high-headed brute, with long tangled mane and tail. I judged that he had been standing in an enclosure for weeks without exercise, and had had his food thrown to him. The Kaffirs held him by a long rope, and were glaring at him as if he had been a lion.

A streak of cussedness came into me. Here was my chance to prove I was really a wild man of the West. Taking the rope from the Kaffirs, I made a half hitch and jammed it around the horse's lower jaw. He objected, struck with his forefeet, tried to rear, and backed away. I followed him up, lashed him with my zambok, and finally had him on his haunches against the paddock fence. Pulling the rope tight around his jaw, Indian fashion, I gathered up a handful of mane, and jumped on him bare-back before he could gain his feet. As he came up I drove both spurs into him, and laid about his hips with the zambok.

"He's mad! He's drunk crazy! He'll be killed!" yelled the crowd.

"Get off that horse!" called Bryan.

"Go to hell!" I yelled back, and worked with whip and spurs.

The paddock gate was open, and the entrance full of people; the startled mustang was bolting toward the crowd.

"Shut that gate!" shrieked Bryan. But the crowd scattered.

Longmarket Street lay straight ahead of us, and we had a clear road for several blocks.

Pietermaritzburg had been asleep for a hundred years, but it came to life that morning. As we neared the center of town rickshaws sprang out of our way, dignified ladies gathered up their skirts and scampered for safety, natives carrying baskets on their heads dropped them and ran, a bobby waved his stick and cried:

"Hi! Hi say! you cawn't do that!"

But we were doing it, and we continued to do it. With dust flying, and tail straight out, the mustang tore through the street. I was spurring, lashing, yelling and whooping. We thundered across the railroad tracks and up the hill to Fort Napier. The mustang had clean forgot to buck, if he ever knew how, and was racing like a horse demented.

Outside the Fort a sentry brought his rifle down and challenged:

"'Alt, 'oo goes there?"

Then fell over backwards, trying to get out of our way.

We raced through the camp and followed the road out to the opposite side where a gate led into the open veldt. Again a sentry challenged; then jumped aside as we thundered past. Thank goodness, they had the habit of keeping the gates open in the daytime.

For twelve miles I lashed the mustang across the veldt, till finally he was fairly staggering, and was covered in a lather; then I pulled him up, turned him around, and let him walk back toward town. As soon as he showed signs of being rested I made him canter; but I kept him in hand, and let him know I was boss.

Half way back to town I met about thirty men, who had ridden out to pick up my last remains; then, like a conquering hero at the head of a triumphal procession, I rode back through Longmarket Street.

Years later I walked into the Criterion Restaurant in London and overheard two men talking about the wild ride of the Texas Kid. From that day I was established in the Colony. People hailed me wherever I went, and shortly afterward, when the war finally came, I had no trouble in being one of the first to enlist.

CHAPTER 5

With the "Mounted"

AGAIN came the war scare. This time more ominous than ever. Each day new batches of refugees came down from the Transvaal and Free States. The Dublin Fusiliers were stationed at Fort Napier; they with the Tenth Mountain Battery were entrained and sent to Charlestown on the border. Immediately there was a hue and cry from the Boer Cabinet. They considered this an act of hostility from a supposedly friendly nation. Papers all over the world said that Britain was massing troops on the Transvaal border preparatory to grabbing another piece of territory. So the Dublin Fusiliers and the Mountain Battery were withdrawn to Dundee, some thirty miles away. This left the pass through the Drakensburg unprotected, and that night General Joubert with forty thousand armed men crossed the border and commenced a raid through Natal.

This army met with no opposition except from the Natal Mounted Police and a few civilians who joined the Police with any weapons they could lay hands on. The British mustered every one they could, and by taking any semblance of a man who could ride and

shoot, they managed to muster around five thousand to meet Joubert's forty thousand. Those were stirring, hectic days, and the memory of them still thrills me.

I was among the first rush of volunteers, and though I was only fourteen I was tall for my age and had a reputation. The Mounted Police were doing all the fighting that was being done in the first few days, and the Dublin Fusiliers, the King's Royal Rifles, and the Fifth Lancers were hurrying forward to get into the scrap. The Mounted Police were getting columns of glory for their gallant attempts to check the advance of this invading army. In groups of four and five they harassed the advance guards, delaying them at bridges and in passes through the hills. I decided that the "Mounted" was the outfit for me. They were forming what they called a Mounted Police Field Force, which was intended to operate as a regiment. A fine idea, but it didn't work. The troopers were too valuable as guides, scouts and interpreters to be used for fighting as ordinary soldiers. As soon as regiments arrived, which they did with surprising rapidity, one or more of the Mounted Police were attached to them. But at first they had the idea of a regiment and were hastily recruiting for it.

"Can you ride?" asked the recruiting officer, as I stood before him with chest expanded, and almost tip-toeing. Then he smiled as if he had asked a necessary, but useless question.

"Yes, sir!" I answered, taking hope from his smile.

"Get on that horse, and go over those hurdles."

I followed his instructions and came back—rather thrilled to see looks of admiration on the faces of those gathered around.

"See if he can shoot." The officer turned to the next man.

A sergeant told me to follow him, and led the way, with several other recruits, to a short range butt. Here I fired twelve shots, and hit the target twice. But that was sufficient. I was issued with a horse and saddlery, carbine, pistol, uniform and other equipment. That was all there was to it. I didn't sign a paper, or pass a doctor. I could ride and shoot. Right then nothing else mattered. I believe papers were signed for us, and medical certificates filled out later.

Men! men! men! The British needed men—men who could ride and shoot, their age didn't matter, their physical condition didn't matter, so long as they could be temporarily used to stem the tide of that army of forty thousand of the finest fighting men the world has ever seen. I say they were the finest fighting men without reservation. The Boer first, last, and always was a fighter, a man, and a gentleman. Though I have seen much of war and fighting men since, and have fought with and against several nations, at no time have I met finer and more honorable soldiers.

That night we were told to fall in mounted with full kit. We thought it was for an inspection, to see

if we had everything properly assembled. They did make a superficial inspection. Then came the orders: "From the right, number." "From the right, tell off by fours." Then: "Squads right, march!"

Somehow, after a bit of floundering around and sorting out, we managed to march off in column of fours. We marched all that night, all the next day, and most of the following night, making short halts to feed and water the horses. We ourselves nibbled on hard-tack and bully-beef. We covered sixty miles on that first march, and after a day of rest, in reserve, we took a place in the firing line.

I didn't know where we were, and I didn't care. Those first few weeks time and place meant nothing to me. For me those were glorious days. I reveled in every moment of them. The feel of the carbine in my hands, the pistol in my belt, my uniform, the sturdy horse beneath me, the silent night marching, the cracking and flashing of rifles, the whizzing of bullets, and the crashing of shells, fulfilled every dream my wild fancy had ever had.

With surprising rapidity British regiments appeared. They came from every quarter of the British empire. Yet every day the Boers drove us further back. Sir George White, with most of the First Army, got bottled up in Ladysmith, and the big advance of the Boer Commandoes continued. Sir Redvers Buller arrived, and out of the flowing streams of troops that were rushing in daily he formed what was to be known as the Relief Column. Then the

armies came to a deadlock on the Tugela River, and settled down to trench warfare.

The British began to take stock of themselves. The first big emergency had passed, they had stopped the advance of the Boers. Now they needed trained men to pierce through the Boer lines, and drive them back into their own country. A process of weeding out began. Some of the hastily recruited youngsters had shown a yellow streak when confronted with actual fighting; some of the old men had proved physically unfit for a long-drawn-out campaign. Orders were issued that all these youngsters and old men were to be sent back, discharged or put on duty in the safer areas. This order included me, as I was the youngest one in the army.

I was ordered on regular police duty, and sent to headquarters at 'Maritzburg. This was dull work, and consisted chiefly in guard duty and patroling places that were considered to be in danger from enemy spies. Our most important guard was around the Armory. Here I shot my first man.

The Armory was situated at the rear of Government House, which enemy sympathizers attempted to blow up on several occasions. A narrow lane, called a street, ran between the two high walls that surrounded the Armory and Government House. I was on duty in this lane at about three o'clock one morning when I heard a commotion inside the grounds of Government House. Soon a light came cautiously over the top of the wall, and a Cockney sergeant of

the military guard of Government House stuck his head up.

"Hi, sentry!" he called, "they's a bloke got in 'ere, hand 'e's hup to mischief; if yer see 'im, plug 'im!"

I replied that I'd keep a lookout for him; then the sergeant disappeared behind the wall, and the search inside continued.

I drew back into the shadow of a tree whose limbs reached over the Armory wall, cocked my carbine and waited. Soon I heard feet running, followed by a scraping against the opposite wall; then a man in civilian clothes appeared on the top, about fifteen paces from where I stood. In one hand he held a drawn pistol.

"Halt!" I commanded. "Drop that gun!"

He had thrown one leg over the wall, and now sat a-straddle of it. Trying to pierce the dark shadows to locate where my voice had come from, he raised the pistol as if to fire. Then I let drive. He threw up his hands, swayed a moment, then fell back on the opposite side of the wall.

That shot brought out the relief guards and the patrols. In a few minutes the place was alive with armed men, which was a comfort to me. Soon the Cockney sergeant stuck his head over the wall again.

"Hi, sentry!" he called. "You got 'im; 'e was a bad 'un!"

That was all the information I ever had on the subject. I tried to find out if I had killed him or merely wounded him; but no one seemed to know.

The whole thing was kept a mystery, and I, with the rest of the guard, was cautioned not to talk.

Almost immediately afterward I was ordered to Krantzkop, a post near the border of Zululand, and the other men who were on Armory duty that night were sent to outlying posts. Personally, I didn't care and found it a relief to get away from the eternal guard duty. This new post promised a little excitement. There was much talk of Joubert making a flank movement around the British right; this would have shifted the theater of war to this locality. For the first few weeks I lived in hope, and was fairly happy patroling along the Lower Tugela.

Then came an uprising or "faction fight" between two Zulu Chiefs, I believe their names were Slangapiza and Umkaiya. Periodically they went to war against each other. Each of them commanded about five thousand fighting men. We had ten troopers and two sergeants on the post at the time, and we were confronted with the job of stopping ten thousand crazy Zulus, armed with assagais, knobkerries, and shields, from chopping each other to pieces. I began to think that I would never die of old age.

The senior sergeant seemed a little worried about me and what I might do when the crucial moment came. There was some talk of leaving me behind at the post. But our numbers were few enough, and after all, a uniform, even if worn by a youngster, always has a powerful psychological effect on any aborigine!

"No matter what happens," warned the sergeant, "don't draw a gun! If you do, we'll all be killed! This fight has got to be settled with pencils and note books."

He seemed to be addressing his remarks especially to me, for though he had us all lined up, he never took his eyes off me once. Here was a new one on me. Twelve men had to go out armed with pencils and paper and bring reason to ten thousand crazy Kaffirs, who couldn't read or write, and wouldn't have recognized their names in a full page spread of a tabloid paper. I guess I looked puzzled. Most of the other men had had experience in faction fights, and seemed uninterested in the sergeant's remarks.

"Ride up to any Enduna you see," continued the sergeant, "write down his name in your note book, and tell him to take his men and go home. He'll know that if he doesn't he'll be arrested later and sent to jail."

"Suppose you don't know his name?" I asked, in my ignorance.

"You don't have to know his name, just write in your book, and be sure he sees you write. That will be enough for him."

I saw the other men grinning, and bit my lips shut.

We rode off for their favorite battling ground, and got there just in time to see the two armies meet; but too late to stop the first onslaught. The Zulu's method of fighting is to throw his assagai into the

body of his enemy, and then fight his way to it with his knobkerry and cow-hide shield. As we rode down the side of the mountain the two painted, shiny black armies came running along the valley, one up and one down. They came to within about thirty yards of each other and halted a moment while each bellowed a challenge; then they let drive with their assagais and rushed forward. The first shock of the assault sounded like the explosion of a mine; then came a continuous roar, like the rumble of distant thunder, as the knobkerries bashed against heads and shields. Piercing screams filled the air; some from dying and wounded men, and some from fanatical warriors issuing their challenges after the fight had commenced.

In a few minutes the black struggling mass was enveloped in a cloud of dust, above which flew assagais, and from within which came ten thousand weird noises. My heart almost stood still, and vaguely I wondered what in the hell good a pencil and note book were going to be in stopping this glorified cat and dog fight.

The sergeant halted us near the edge of the mêlée, and there we waited on our horses till the rumbling of thunder and strange noises died down, and the two armies drew back out of the cloud of dust to reform and charge again. Then our work commenced. We rode between them and spread out. Wherever we saw an Enduna (petty chief) and we could tell them by the black haloes around the tops of their heads,

we rode up to him, let him see us write in the book, then told him to take his men and go home.

The first Enduna I approached was an old man and didn't look so savage.

"Hey, Enduna!" I yelled, trying to keep the fear out of my voice, "Humbargy!" Which means go home.

He looked up at me and grinned, then said: "Icona!" which is the African equivalent for "Nothing doing"; and a strapping young warrior, sharpening his assagai against a rock, let out a war whoop and sprang into the air toward me with arms extended. My hand almost reached my pistol; then I remembered the sergeant's warning, and commenced to write rapidly in my book.

What did I write? Nothing. My hand trembled so the pencil just made scrawls all over the page. But it worked. The old Enduna straightened to a salute and pleaded with me not to report him to the Great White Queen. Then he called his men together and led them sorrowfully down the valley.

This gave me courage, and in a few minutes I had routed a dozen or more Endunas with their followers. By this time other leaders had managed to avoid our small number, and another charge was effected. Again we waited until they drew back to reorganize; then rode in to wield our pencils and note books and win another bloodless victory.

Counting up the dead and wounded on both sides, which was somewhere near a hundred, we decided

that the fight was a draw, and there would probably be peace in the valley for another year.

The sergeant came to me as we rode back to the Post and complimented me on my coolness. I didn't tell him that I was scared stiff all through the fight, and mighty glad when it was over. But a pencil and note book is a great peace-producing equipment when backed up by a powerful monarch like Victoria.

A New England missionary came and set up camp near the post. Immediately the Police began to prepare for trouble. The sergeant sent to headquarters and requested that reinforcements be sent up at once. This particular missionary was particularly silly in his treatment of the Kaffirs. Around his camp there was continued handshaking and back-slapping. His wife cuddled the Kaffir women, while he told funny stories, which they didn't understand, to the Kaffir men. But he laughed at his own jokes, and built up a mess of trouble for himself and all the country around. The sergeant tried to warn him; but he wouldn't be warned, and finally got in a huff, and removed his camp to the edge of the valley, where he felt he could carry on as he pleased.

He had two daughters and a son about twelve years of age. The boy didn't know what it was all about. The girls were in their late teens, and were rather attractive. The troopers took every opportunity to hang around the mission station, and to some extent they convinced the girls, especially the younger one, that their parents were on the wrong track as regards

the handling of the natives, and that trouble was sure to come. The sergeant rather encouraged this en masse courting, believing the presence of the troopers around the station would stave off trouble.

We were playing the last rounds of a late poker game. Doran, who was especially smitten with Katherine, the younger girl, had just ridden from the mission station, and was standing watching the play. I remember that Craig, an Australian, had opened with a shilling, and Toppleston, an Englishman, had made it half a crown, but the cards were never drawn. There was a scuffle of feet on the porch and a convert native dashed into the room, his eyes bulging with terror, blood streaming from half a dozen wounds.

"Baas Lowry has given the Endunas whisky! They are drunk! They go to kill the missionaries!"

Doran pushed him aside and rushed out of the room. A moment later we saw him ride out of the compound bareback and spurring his horse madly toward the mission station. In a few minutes we were all riding hard after him.

Lowry was a degenerate trader who lived with two native women in the valley. We learned later that he had roused the Kaffirs to murder the missionaries and steal the younger girl, whom he tried to carry away into Portuguese East Africa, where he could have forced her to live with him in the jungle. The Kaffirs were incensed with the missionary because he had taught their sons and daughters to believe that they

had a right to mix and live with white people, which made them all want to get white mates. This teaching always resulted in the young Kaffirs going to the cities and becoming degenerates, for they would seek white companionship, and of course could only find it among the outcasts of the white settlers. A Kaffir regards his daughters as just so much wealth, for he will get from ten to twelve head of cattle for a girl in marriage; but after a girl becomes a convert and goes to the cities she is a total loss, for no young native will buy her.

Lowry had worked through the chagrin of an old Enduna named Umzulata, who had lost three daughters and two sons through the teachings of the missionaries. Lowry told Umzulata that he would buy the missionary's younger daughter for ten bottles of whisky and gave him five in advance. The rest was simple. The old Kaffir thought he saw a chance for revenge, and with the whisky he induced several other natives who had suffered as he had to join him, and massacre the station, while he stole the girl, and carried her off to Lowry.

At the station we found a shambles. The missionary's head had been battered to pulp. His wife and elder daughter lay on the ground stripped of every vestige of clothing, their bodies black and blue from having been mauled by powerful hands. The boy had been strangled to death. Around the place lay the bodies of several native converts who had tried to defend the missionaries. It was a sorry mess, and

meant that the country would be in an uproar for weeks, and no white person would be safe.

We could find no trace of Katherine or Doran, and hoped he had arrived in time to save her. A wounded servant crawled out from his hiding place among the rocks and told us that Umzulata had taken Katherine off into the valley, and Doran had ridden after them. Then the chase commenced. For two days and nights the Kaffirs dodged us up and down the valley, over the mountains, and across the rolling veldt, doubling back and forth, but always keeping in or near the rough country. The sergeant sent in for more reinforcements, and the next morning we were joined by a troop of thirty men and two officers. Then we divided into two bands.

Near Lowry's shack we found the bodies of Umzulata and one of his sons riddled with bullets. At first we thought this was the work of Doran, and rejoiced that the girl was safe; then we learned from Lowry's jealous deserted women that Lowry had murdered the Kaffirs, and had made Katherine believe he had rescued her from them, and had taken her with his pack ponies into Zululand, and headed toward the Portuguese Territory. Katherine had thought that Lowry was taking her to Greytown, and had helped him to drive his pack ponies over the rough mountain trails.

Six of us left the main body and followed Doran. We rode all night, and till late in the morning, when we heard shooting ahead of us; then we spurred our

tired horses forward, and reached Doran shortly after he had killed the trader. Katherine was a game girl. She rode back to the valley with us, and we marveled at her ability to ride and talk calmly after the night of terror she had passed through.

In the valley we again heard shooting; this time it was heavy. We knew that the Police had surrounded the Kaffirs, and we hurried on to join in the fight, first telling Doran to take the girl and get to Krantzkop; but she refused to leave us, and when we reached the fight she insisted on holding our horses while we went in and helped to subdue the desperate natives, who realized that they all faced death sentences, and would not surrender until shot down. That was a sorry fight. We killed over thirty of them, and wounded fifty more; and only managed to take a handful alive and unhurt. Two of the Police were killed and several badly wounded.

Years later I told this story before a mission society in Nashville, Tennessee. I had been asked to come there and speak, and had warned them that what I had to say would not be helpful to them in raising funds with which to send missionaries to Africa or any other uncivilized place. After my talk the chairman refused to speak to me, and I left the platform in the midst of a dead silence, which suddenly broke out into a storm of indignation. I have been told that my talk bore fruit, for it started some people thinking, and I believe it was instrumental in bringing about a new policy with the mission so-

cieties. Now I believe a missionary has to go through a rigid training of three or more years before being sent out, and then they are trained for a specific country. At the time I am speaking of they used to go joy riding all over the world, and often did more harm than good, as in this particular case, which cost the lives of several good men.

Things had scarcely quieted down from the uproar caused by the missionary when smallpox broke out among the Kaffirs, and a large section of the country had to be put under quarantine. I was sent on the quarantine patrol, with orders to shoot to kill any one attempting to pass through the lines. No one tried to pass me, and the work became terribly monotonous.

On December 3rd, 1899, the New York *World* came out with a two page spread telling about me, a New York boy, fighting the Boers. It gave a rather twisted account of my past life, and had the story embellished with glaring colored pictures. This story reached England and finally Africa, and brought on an investigation by some local writers. I was subject to a lot of newspaper notoriety, which was followed by razzing from my associates, because the papers all spoke of me as the youngster of the war, and I wasn't even in the war.

I was sick and disgusted with the police work, which under ordinary circumstances might have made me happy and content; but with a first class war in progress just fifty miles away it was too much

to expect of any red-blooded boy to remain quiet. I had been devising schemes for getting on the field, and when the newspaper stories began to appear I definitely decided to go.

CHAPTER 6

Outlawed Again

MY plans for deserting the Natal Mounted Police and enlisting in some one of the irregular regiments that were serving on the field had seemed simple enough when I was riding quarantine up in Zululand; but when I got down country and tried to put them into operation I ran into difficulties. I reached the capital after the recruiting offices had closed for the day; so I had nothing to do but amuse myself. I had many friends in Maritzburg, too many for the good of my plans; so I decided to keep away from them. I thought the quieter I kept the less chance I would run of discovery; so I kept away from my old haunts, and spent the evening drinking rather judiciously in a pub on the outskirts of town.

Looking back it seems strange to me now that I did not want to go on a tear, for I had been on the veldt for several months. Instead I begrudged the hours I had to wait before I could enlist. I was intent on getting to the front, and nothing else could find a place in my mind. Mixing around and keeping quiet I learned, by listening, that the South African Light Horse had had many casualties, and were doing

some hasty recruiting. Next to them Thorneycrofts Mounted Infantry seemed the best bet.

Early the next morning I appeared before the recruiting officer of the South African Light Horse. I was sunburned brown, was hard as nails, and showed that I had just come off the veldt.

"I see you've been on service," he said, "but you look young to be time-expired in the Police. You look young even to be in service. Let me see your discharge!"

Here was something I hadn't counted on.

"I must have left it at the hotel," I said, fumbling in my pockets as if I thought it might be there.

"Well, go and get it; if it's all right, I'll take you." He looked hard-boiled.

"Yes, sir." I saluted and walked away. Swearing inwardly.

"Something peculiar there." I heard the sergeant say as I hurried out of the fair grounds.

"Looks like good material though," said the officer, "and we can't be too particular."

Outside the fair grounds I walked rapidly to a secondhand shop on a back street. Here I had sold several things when I first landed in the country. It was run by a beady-eyed Malay, who bought cast-off things from white people and sold them to Kaffirs. After some dickering I bought a shabby-looking outfit of civilian clothes, and sold him my good Police uniform, which was my best, and nearly new, for a few shillings. Then I returned to the fair grounds

and avoiding the recruiting office of the South African Light Horse I went to the recruiting office of Thorneycrofts Mounted Infantry.

"Where are you from?" asked the recruiting officer, looking me up and down.

"Canada, sir."

"How'd you come over here?"

"On a horse boat from New Orleans, sir." The British government was buying horses and mules from America in great numbers. Each ship-load brought thirty to forty adventurous Americans, who on landing called themselves Canadians and enlisted in the irregular regiments.

"I'm afraid you're too young."

My heart felt like a lump of lead. But I could tell by his hesitant manner that he was tempted to accept me.

"I'm eighteen," I said, "and I've never been sick! And I can ride and shoot!"

"Where'd you learn to ride and shoot?"

"On cattle ranches in the West!"

"You're eighteen?" He smiled as if he didn't believe me. Then he turned to a sergeant. "Take him to the Medical Officer, and see what he says."

The M. O. put me through a rigid examination, then smiled.

"Ever been in Texas?" he asked.

"No. sir!" I thought the game was up.

"Ever hear of the 'Texas Kid'?"

"No, sir!" I tried to look puzzled.

"It's a wonder you didn't, he raised enough hell around here. You remind me of him."

Then I recalled that my months on the veldt and my shabby clothes had worked a change in me.

"You're fit for the racket all right," he said, and punched me on the chest.

He could have punched my head, and I wouldn't have minded, I was that glad to know that he had passed me.

In a short while I was sworn in as a private in Thorneycrofts Mounted Infantry. We were housed under the grand stand, and all that day and the next three days I stuck close to my quarters. Several times I saw men come into the fair grounds who knew me well, and twice troopers of the Mounted Police rode in, and I watched them from under cover. Several men tried to get me to go out with them in the evenings, but I always made excuses. Luckily we had nothing to do but wait for a troop train going north.

On the morning of the fourth day after my enlistment we were lined up and a sergeant put us through the A B C's of drill. This, we were told, was a sure sign that we were going up the line in a day or two. They always gave the recruits sufficient drill to get them to the railroad station in some semblance of order, otherwise there was very little attention paid to drilling in that campaign.

While we were drilling a corporal of the Imperial Light Horse rode in. His name was Lenward; he had been a trooper in the Mounted Police, and had been

discharged after serving a jail sentence for shooting another trooper in a duel. He was a good fellow, and had always been friendly to me. Still I hoped he wouldn't recognize me. But he did.

When we were dismissed he came up to me and asked: "What's your name?"

"White," I said, and smiled.

"I thought I recognized you." Then he took me by the arm, and led me to one side.

"Look here, Kid," he said in a low voice, "have you taken an oath and been signed up yet?"

"Yes. Why? You're not going to split on me?"

"Of course not; but it's bad. They'll get you sure as hell! Why damn it, boy, you're too well known! You'll be meeting fellows that know you all the time."

"Sure, I know they'll get me! All I hope is no one gives me away until I've had a chance at the front."

He was silent and seemed to be weighing some question. After a while he spoke. "Yes, that's the best thing to do."

"What is?" I asked, beginning to get a little perturbed.

"I'm in charge of stores here," he said, "and I'll get them to let me have you until there's a train going up. You can keep under cover there in the store shed, and it won't be so bad. If I see any of the fellows coming, I'll tip you off, and you can hide in the back."

"But how about you? You'll get in Dutch if I'm caught hiding in your store."

"Don't worry about me, Kid. I don't recognize you in that get-up."

This was certainly a relief. The last four days had been rather trying, although, as in my hobo days, I got somewhat of a thrill out of playing hide-and-seek with the authorities. For the next two days I kept inside the store shed. Lenward brought me my meals. He was a good scout. A year later I saw him shot to death with seven bullets in his chest.

We marched to the station at night, for which I was thankful. On the train going up to the front I kept inside the car. I felt that I would do most anything to get on the field, and be able to look the world in the face and say that I was really taking part in the war, and to some extent justify those terrible newspaper stories. I knew, as Lenward had said, that sooner or later I would be discovered. But that was something of the future, and I have never been given to worry about things at a distance. I felt that my chances of discovery would be less once I reached the regiment. For a time this proved true.

We joined the regiment at Charlestown, and within a few days I had seen some real fighting. Now I was quite happy, and as the weeks rolled by I began to forget about facing arrest. I got quite used to the name of White; and anyhow traveling under an assumed name was nothing new to me.

The Boers were finally driven back into their own country, and when the British got them on the north side of the Drakensburg they decided to man the

mountain passes and keep them there. My squadron was sent to hold a minor pass in an isolated sector. Most of the men were glad; they had been having pretty heavy fighting and were ready to settle down for a rest. This didn't please me so well, but I felt safe from discovery there, and the chances were that I would get into some more action later on.

When we arrived at the post we found the Fifth Dragoon Guards holding it. They had occupied it for a week or more. The first night there I was detailed for picket duty on a post that overlooked the side of the mountain and commanded the pass itself.

"You'd better keep a sharp lookout here. We had a man killed on this post two nights ago," warned the sergeant in charge of the picket we were relieving.

"How'd they get him?" asked our own sergeant.

"Well, that's just the point. How *did* they get him? And *who* got him? All we know is a man went on sentry alive, and was found dead—stabbed in a dozen places, and half the bones in his body broken!"

"Must have gone to sleep and let a native runner slip up on him."

"I don't think so. He was a reliable man, and we'd been resting here several days. Looks like treachery to me—just plain murder. But we can't figure out who did it."

"If he'd been awake, he'd have fired or called out the relief."

"That's true. But he wasn't a fellow who'd sleep on sentry."

"Perhaps a leopard got him from behind and killed him before he could make an outcry."

"We thought of that. But leopards tear a man and eat him. This fellow was simply stabbed and his bones broken. Looked as though he had struggled with a powerful man."

The sergeant repeated his warning for caution; then led his men away.

We made our camp for the night and cooked our supper, then played poker until we grew drowsy.

Owing to the roughness of the terrain the sentry had to stand alone among the rocks some thirty yards from the relief, who camped on a ledge higher up on the mountain and accessible only by a narrow winding path, over which men had to climb in single file.

There was a delightful calm through the pass; the air was warm and balmy; and a full moon hung over the mountain. I spent my second tour of duty admiring the beauties of the night, as fantastic shadows played over the steeply sloping ground before me.

"See anything, Kid?" asked McCardell, who came to relieve me.

"Not a thing," I replied. "This post is a regular rest cure."

McCardell laughed, and I left him to climb up the trail to my blankets.

Perhaps I had been asleep an hour, perhaps longer, when I sat bolt upright at the sound of a shot, followed by a piercing scream that turned my blood

cold. I grabbed my rifle and rushed down the trail behind the sergeant, and the rest of the relief followed.

Crack! Crack! McCardell's rifle echoed through the pass as we joined him.

"What is it, Mac?" asked the sergeant.

"A native runner."

McCardell fired again, and following the flash of his rifle I saw a dark object disappear among the rocks.

"I hit him first shot," he explained, "but he seems able to travel."

"He can beat all hell screaming!" said the sergeant. "Too bad you didn't get him, Mac. But we'll track him as soon as daylight comes." The first glimmers were then breaking over the crest of the mountain.

After breakfast Jonesy, a nervy little Welshman, and I took up the trail of blood that was easily followed over the rocks. To our surprise, instead of leading down unto the open veldt of the Transvaal, it led off into the fastness of the mountains. In places it went up over rocks and steep ascents that we had difficulty in climbing. Finally it disappeared into a huge cave, that was honey-combed with dark passages. Here we lost it, and for several hours we wandered about in the darkness, striking matches in the hopes of picking it up again.

"That must have been an animal, Mac," said the sergeant, after we had told our story.

"No, siree!" replied McCardell. "I can tell a Kaffir from an animal. The moon was shining on him, and when I shot he was standing upright, not two hundred yards away. He was crawling, just the way natives do, when I first saw him. I would have let him come closer, but suddenly he stood bolt upright and commenced walking away."

"Well, whatever it was it's gone. Let's get back to camp."

After that things were quiet on the post for over a week. Then my turn for picket duty came again. And again Sergeant Jennings, McCardell, and Jonesy were part of the detail.

Jonesy drew the watch after me. Twice during the night he relieved me on sentry duty. Twice during the night I spent two hours in the still darkness, straining my eyes and ears for sight or sound of anything moving on the mountain side. But it was all very quiet—quiet to a degree that was almost oppressive.

The sun stood in the sky line a puddle of blood as the picket ate breakfast around the fire at the back of the ledge.

"Guess I'll take Jonesy some coffee," I said, and filled a pannikin and walked carefully down the trail with it.

As I rounded the huge boulder that concealed the sentry post I drew back in horror at the sight before me. There lay Jonesy, mangled and twisted, his legs wedged in between two rocks, his body thrown back

like a contortionist, his exposed neck showing three gaping wounds, like the stabs of an assagai. He lay before me—dead! Beneath him was a puddle of congealing blood.

I stood speechless, cold with horror. The pannikin slipped from my hand. The hot coffee poured down the front of my leg and scalded me—but I felt no pain.

I tried to call the relief, but my tongue filled my mouth. Then I heard a crashing sound and caught the glimpse of a black body disappearing into the bushes on the mountain side below the post. This roused me to action. I grabbed Jonesy's rifle, and fired shot after shot, in rapid succession, into the bushes.

My fusillade brought the relief on the double. Three of us gave chase, while Sergeant Jennings sent a fourth to camp headquarters, himself remaining with one man to hold the post.

When the Captain got Jennings' message he ordered out half the Squadron to run down the murderer. They combed the mountains, pass and valley for miles around, but found nothing.

Examination of Jonesy's body by the surgeon showed his neck, back, both arms and one leg broken, besides seven deep stabs about the face, neck and shoulders.

"No ordinary man could have done this thing," said the surgeon. "This murderer was a giant of unusual strength. Whatever his reason, he is possessed

of deep-seated hatred and violence. He is probably a maniac, who has developed great cunning, and great strength and swiftness. Doubtless a giant native, who has a grudge against the white man for imaginary wrongs."

The doctor's theory was generally accepted, and the precaution was taken to double all sentries on the posts of what had now become known as "Death Pass." Twice during succeeding nights the pickets reported that a native runner had approached the post where Jonesy had been killed. On each occasion they had attempted to shoot him, but had failed even to wound him.

Then the theory of the doctor was partly exploded by the finding of the body of a native runner on the trail leading through the pass. The man had been murdered in the same manner Jonesy had been murdered. His body lay in a twisted heap, and in a broad leather belt, which he wore across his shoulder, we found his dispatches undisturbed.

But the doctor still clung to his theory of an insane giant; others expressed the opinion that the killer was a wild animal, though they could think of no animal that would slay men in this manner, without even attempting to eat the bodies.

Again things became quiet around the post. For two weeks nothing had been heard of what the men were now referring to as the Black Terror of Death Pass. Having double sentries meant double work, and the majority of the Squadron were in favor of

going back to single sentries. So single sentries again became the order of the day.

For three more nights peace continued; then, just before daybreak one morning, a shot, a piercing scream, and a half-stifled cry brought the camp to its feet with a jolt. When the relief rushed down to the post they found the body of Travers, the sentry, twisted and stabbed the same as that of Jones; but no trace of the murderer could be found.

On the afternoon of that same day the King's Royal Rifles sent a company in to relieve us, and the next morning we rode away to join the advance on Standerton.

I had thought that I had iron nerves that nothing could upset; but the ghastliness of the murders in Death Pass had me all unstrung, and I was more than glad when we rode down onto the open veldt, and were fighting against a real and tangible enemy. We were having casualties every day, but these were normal deaths of war, and men accepted them as part of the day's work.

The fighting grew heavier. If anything the Boers were fighting harder than ever before. In the early days, for the first eight months, they were invaders, fighting on British territory, and they had the upper hand. Now things were reversed, they were back in their own country with a strong enemy pressing them hard. They had begun to recognize that their attempt to drive the British out of Africa was going to cost them their freedom, and when a man is fight-

ing for freedom, he is apt to put up a game fight. They contested every foot of ground we advanced; but we kept forging ahead, till the army became worn out with constant fighting and settled down for a rest just north of Standerton.

While in rest we were joined by a detail of casuals —men who had been in hospital recovering from wounds and fever, some who had been on leave, and some freshly recruited. By this time I had grown utterly careless, and foolishly went to take a look at the new arrivals. In charge of them was a Sergeant Slater, a man I had known as a trooper in the Mounted Police. He recognized me at once, and came over and talked to me.

"I heard you had deserted, Kid," he said. "Down in Maritzburg they feel sure you are up here in one of the regiments. But don't worry, I won't give you away. Remember, if you get into trouble, come to me, I'm your friend!"

He put his arm around me, and told me how much he admired me. Yet I didn't feel happy over meeting Slater; he had never shown me or any one else any particular friendship, and was always regarded as a man who was out for himself in all things.

There is a standing reward of two pounds sterling for a deserter from any branch of the British Service. The next day I was arrested and sent under escort to Standerton, where I was put in jail and held until the Mounted Police could be notified and could send an escort for me. While they were waiting for the

necessary papers to be made out, authorizing the jailer at Standerton to hold me, the clerk looked up from his writing and asked: "Who is to get the reward for the prisoner, sir?"

"Sergeant Slater," said the Adjutant.

There was murder in my heart. I looked around in hopes of seeing Slater, but he had sense enough to keep out of my sight. If he had denounced me as soon as he saw me, I could have at least respected him. Why he should have used the underhand manner he did, and declared himself my friend, I have never been able to fathom.

The captain of my squadron, who was an officer of the Bengal Lancers, and had been loaned to Thorneycrofts, came to me just before they took me away, and told me he was sorry I was going, and that he would make a point to be present at my courtmartial. He said he believed he could succeed in getting me a very nominal, or possibly a suspended, sentence. Then he shook hands with me and told me not to worry. This made me very happy, and for the next few days I regarded the whole thing as a joke.

The jailer at Standerton was an old friend from the Mounted Police; so I spent a pleasant week with him, having every privilege except going down into the town, and I believe he would have trusted me to do that, if I had asked him. When the escort arrived from headquarters they turned out to be pals also. All the way down the line I was treated with consideration. The papers had written me up again and

people, when they learned I was on the train or around the station—it was a tiresome journey down, with much changing of trains—came to offer me presents of good things to eat and drink, and tried to show sympathy. My escort, who shared in my luxuries, said it was the best detail they had had since entering the service.

But the blow came at Pietermaritzburg. Here, after a night in jail, I was taken before a civil magistrate's court for trial. I objected and asked that I might be tried by a military court; but was told that as I had deserted from the Police my offense came within the jurisdiction of the civil and not the military courts. While I was protesting, which apparently I had a right to do, the public prosecutor came to me. He was a suave fellow, and had a habit of rubbing his hands together while he talked.

"Look here, my boy," he said, in a kindly manner, "your offense is really nothing serious. We all sympathize with you and admire your pluck. We're your friends here. Now you accept trial this morning and plead guilty, and I will ask his honor, the judge, to be as lenient with you as possible. It is probable that I can persuade him to give you a suspended sentence. This will save everybody a lot of trouble, and be much better for you."

Well, it sounded good to me, and I began to think that I was born lucky. So I thanked the prosecutor, agreed to the trial, and promised I would plead guilty.

I was arraigned in the prisoner's dock, and the charge was read by the clerk: "Desertion and fraud enlistment."

"Do you plead guilty, or not guilty?" asked the judge.

"Guilty, my lord!" I answered, thinking it was the right way to answer, and I heard a titter go through the court.

The judge rapped for order, and the prosecutor stepped forward. For the next half hour he enlarged upon the enormity of my crimes, and pleaded with the judge to give me the full limit of sentence within his power. To hear the prosecutor's version of my sins I had all but wrecked the colony, and had just about caused the British to lose the war. Finally the judge got weary of listening to him and rapped him down. Then he read my sentence:

"Six months imprisonment with hard labor!"

I nearly fell through the floor. Six months sounded to me like half a lifetime, and it was the limit of sentence a magistrate could give. Again there was murder in my heart. For the moment I was too stunned to act. They led me out into the corridor, where the prosecutor followed, and gloated over me. Cursing him, and denouncing him as a liar, I made a rush to grab him by the throat. He ran back into the court, and two policemen clinched with me, shoving me against the wall.

"Be quiet, you young fool!" they whispered. "You'll get another six months. Leave that lying

skunk to us, we'll fix him, and no one will ever know."

Some weeks later the prosecutor was waylaid at night, and given a terrible beating. But no one ever knew who did it.

CHAPTER 7

Doing Time

FROM the courthouse I was marched to the civil prison, and there herded with the scum of Africa. I went through the usual routine of prison entrance. My history was taken by an impassive, almost mechanical clerk. Then I was passed to an inner room and ordered to strip. Having stripped I was taken to the prison barber, who clipped my hair so close my head looked like a billiard ball; then I was ordered to take a bath in water that smelled of formaldehyde. After this they examined me for identifying scars or marks. Then I was examined by the prison doctor, and declared physically fit to do hard labor. Finally they gave me a suit of prison clothes stamped all over with "Broad Arrows," the British Government sign of ownership and slavery.

Throughout this embarrassing ordeal the prison attendants were kind and courteous. They were considerate of me all through my months of hard labor. Many of them went out of their way to be nice, and often, when there were no other prisoners around, they would talk to me on this and that; sometimes they openly sympathized with me. Often I was given

light tasks, which were a welcome break in the grinding monotony of our life.

We rose at five o'clock and were marched in groups to the wash troughs. These were long troughs in which the water trickled slowly in at one end, and overflowed as slowly at the other. I used to hope to be in the first group, for then the muck and slime was not so bad; but after several hundred had washed it was like sticking your hands into a hog wallow. At times it was so nauseating that I only pretended to wash, preferring to keep the dirt that was on, and which I was accustomed to, rather than smear myself with the slime of several hundred filthy men. One wash a day was all that we were allowed, and the heat was terrific. Most of the time I was grimed with sweat and rock dust. It was toward the end of my second week that a guard called me gruffly one morning.

"Hey, you, come here!" He tapped me on the shoulder.

I stepped back out of the line, thinking I was going to get into trouble for not washing in the slime.

"Get a bucket and a broom and go swab the steps to the shops."

I got a bucket and filled it at a hydrant. The water looked so cool, clean, and refreshing. I wondered if I dared dip my hands and face in it before swabbing the steps, and looked around to see if the guard was watching me. There he stood right behind me and across the hard lines of his face there was a smile.

"Don't blame you, Kid, for not wanting to wash in that pig-pen. You can do this job every morning." Then he turned and went away.

It was up to me, and I needed no further hint. I swabbed the steps; then rinsed the bucket and had a nice clean wash. Every morning after that my cell was unlocked and I was allowed to go down into the yard alone and swab the steps. This may sound like a trivial thing, but in the sordid life we lived it was a glorious privilege.

When we returned from washing we were marched past the kitchen and each man picked up his breakfast from a long counter. This consisted of a big hunk of dry bread and a large tin cup of skilly—a thin corn-meal gruel. We carried this to our cells and bolted it as quick as possible; for we had to be in the cages by six o'clock.

Each cage held six men, under normal conditions. We were marched inside, and after the cage was locked the guards passed hammers in to us. Then we broke stone for six solid hours. At noon we passed out our hammers, formed lockstep, and marched off for our mid-day meal, which was skilly, potatoes boiled in their skins, and a hunk of bread. Twice a week we got meat—beef on Sunday and mutton on Wednesday; this was boiled to shreds, but tasted mighty good.

We were allowed half an hour for our mid-day meal, then were marched back to the cages till six o'clock. Our evening meal consisted of black tea and

a hunk of bread. When we reached our cells we were tired enough to be glad of a chance to lie down. My second evening in jail brought a surprise. I was lying on my iron cot, too tired even to think, when from the cell next to me there drifted the smell of cigarette smoke. I had been hungry for a smoke, and now the smell of it nearly drove me crazy.

"Hi say, Kid, like a fag?" the Cockney thug next to me called softly.

"Gee, yes!" I answered.

"Stick yer 'and haround."

I crept to the edge of the cell and reached around toward my neighbor. Into my hand he shoved a Players and a couple of matches.

"Keep yer 'ead under yer blanket, when you smokes hit," he admonished.

"Thanks," I whispered; then clutching the fag and matches I sat on the bed, and put a blanket over my head. If you've never smoked under a blanket at the end of a long day on the rock pile, you have no real notion of the fullest joys of smoking. I drew on that fag till sparks burnt my lips; every puff gave me unalloyed happiness. The thug was doing a two-year stretch for beaning a man with a lead pipe and robbing him. But from that night I have never been able to have anything but a kindly feeling toward him.

Every day the jail became more crowded. Most of the prisoners were political, men who had been caught assisting the Boers in minor ways. At first

I hated them wholeheartedly. The cages were packed till we scarcely had room to swing our hammers. The iron cots were taken out of our cells and we slept three in a cell, on the stone floors. There is a prison law in the British empire against locking two convicts together—it must be three or more. Our cells were packed with three of us, but I liked the new arrangement; for it gave the chance for a little sociability at the end of a long day and at meal times. My companions were the Cockney thug and a slinky-eyed pickpocket. They were both experienced jail-birds, and took great pride in showing me the ropes. They both had knives made out of barrel hoops, and knew how to get things smuggled in from the outside. The Cockney had a Kaffir woman who used to send him things through the "sewer", as the underground system from the prison to the outside was called. He always had cigarettes, and was always ready to share them.

At night I went to sleep listening to tales of success in crime. My cell mates had plied their trades in a dozen different countries. Their philosophy of life was different from the crooks I had met in America. The American crook is a crook chiefly because he loves the thrills that go with being a crook. But these fellows were crooks as a protest against the British caste system. They felt that the upper classes had heaped abuse on the lower classes for centuries, and that in robbing the better classes or black-jacking them they were simply getting even

for past wrongs. The Cockney had an inborn hatred for "toffs".

We had a toff in the cage with us. He was really a very decent fellow, but had got in a jam over gambling debts, and had forged a check to clear himself. He had blundered his case so thoroughly that it was evident he was not a crook by nature. Cockney hated him and never missed a chance to make his life a little more miserable. Being an expert with a stone hammer, Cockney could send a splinter most any place he wanted within a radius of ten feet.

"Watch me 'it the toff," he whispered out of the corner of his mouth. Then without looking up he brought his hammer down, and a fine splinter of rock cut the toff's cheek.

"Here, here, my man, be more careful!" The toff wiped the blood away, and went on with his work.

"Sorry, hole top." Cockney grinned, and his hammer sent another splinter flying to the toff's chin.

"I warn you, stop it!" said the toff.

The Cockney laughed, and the cage joined him. There was no guard in sight, and I was worried, for Toff was in a righteous rage. Then the thing happened.

Cockney sent another splinter flying into the face of Toff. The cage began to laugh, then stopped with gaping mouths. Toff's hammer crashed into Cockney's head and he crumpled. Again Toff raised his hammer to strike, and there was murder in his eye.

Another blow from that hammer and Cockney would have been despatched to eternity.

Leaping across Cockney I made a flying tackle for Toff's upraised hand. Then we clinched, Toff and I rolling among the rocks.

"It ain't worth swinging for murder!" I panted in his ear; but Toff had lost control, and was fighting in blind rage.

"Help me hold him!" I yelled to the gaping convicts, who seemed to be frozen with fright.

I heard a whistle blow outside; then a dozen guards, armed with rifles, surrounded the cage. The convicts remained immovable, and Toff was throwing me all over the cage. He had lost his hammer, but finally gave me a blow on the jaw with his fist that knocked me for the count. Just what happened after that I never quite knew.

We were all brought before the governor of the jail, all but Cockney; he was carried to hospital, where the doctor stitched up his head. After some palaver I was exonerated for my part in the scrimmage. Toff was put in solitary confinement, and Cockney, when his head had healed, was given twenty hours shot-drill. Which is the worst punishment I have ever seen given to a human being.

A word description of shot-drill is wholly inadequate. The thing looks so simple and sounds so simple as to give one the impression of not being hard at all. It consists of picking up a fifty pound round shot, carrying it ten paces, and then placing it on

the ground. Then walking another ten paces and picking up another fifty pound shot. To a strong man the first few minutes seems like child's play; then each time he stoops and rises with the shot it feels as if his back were breaking. The drillers walk in a circle, in size according to their number. I tried it once, just to see what it was like, and after half an hour I decided that I was going to keep clear of this punishment.

This fight in the cage gave me two staunch friends, and also gave me a standing among the other convicts and the guards. Toff told me, after he had been released from solitary confinement, that he was eternally indebted to me, that I had saved him from hanging. "For I most certainly would have killed that blighter, if you hadn't interfered, and I'm always your friend," he said, and shook his hand.

"If you mean that," I said, "write a letter to Heeley-Hutchinson for me, and ask him to get me out of here." Heeley-Hutchinson was the governor of the colony. At that time I could hardly sign my own name.

He asked the guard for paper, pen, and ink; and they allowed us to spend a whole half day drawing up a plea. Toff sure did make that plea strong; when I read it I began to think I was a sort of hero, and that the British government ought to do something handsome for me. Well, the plea, with the help of my friends on the outside, got me out when I had done only half my time.

Cockney said I had saved his life, and was always trying to do something to make it up to me. He kept me supplied with smokes, and often shoved tasty bits of food onto my plate. I grew very fond of both Cockney and Toff. I wanted them to be friends, and told them so. They agreed, and I asked the head guard if Toff could share our cell—I didn't like the pickpocket that was with us, anyway.

So Toff came to bunk with Cockney and me, and we were a happy trio. It was strange the way these two, Cockney and Toff, grew to like each other; but real men, no matter what their strata of life, are like that. Once they find that a man is a man they're for him. We became favorites and were taken out of the cages, and put on the wheelbarrows. This was much better. We had to wheel the unbroken rocks to the cages and take the broken ones away, and load them into wagons. This gave us a chance to get messages through to the outside, and my friends began sending me all sorts of good things by the wagon drivers. Everything was jake, till one day the warden caught me smoking a cigarette out near the gate. Then I went back to the cages, and for a time was somewhat in bad odor.

By this time the jail was so full that they had to put up tents in the yard, and the short-time prisoners were put in them to sleep. Cockney and Toff were both doing two-year stretches; so I was taken from them. Still I liked the tents best, and soon made friends with the crooks there. My part in the cage

fight gave me a little prestige; so I had no difficulties and life became brighter.

With the overcrowding of the prison there arose the difficulty of keeping us busy. The law said we should have hard labor, and the prison authorities saw that we got it. But they had trouble getting rock to break, and difficulty in disposing of it after it was broken. There was little or no road building going on.

When I had first brought prisoners there I had found the old treadmill, which hadn't been used for years, a source of great interest. And after I came there as a prisoner I still enjoyed looking at it, and wondering about the poor wretches who had suffered while climbing its never-ending steps. One morning while I was swabbing—this privilege I kept all through my prison term—I saw men working around the machinery, oiling the wheels, and cleaning up the rusted parts. I began to wonder; but not for long.

That day, instead of being marched to the cages, a group of us were marched to the treadmill. Then began one of the most terrible experiences that has ever befallen men. They put us on the great wheel eight at a time. We held to an iron rail above our heads, and climbed up the never-ending steps. Behind us stood an armed guard, who every ten minutes would call: "Shift"; then the man on the left would drop off, and we would all shift over one pace, and a fresh man would get on, on the right. The

man who invented the treadmill must have had a diabolical soul. The memory of the agony of those days will always remain fresh with me. Often now in my sleep I dream of eternally climbing that wheel, and wake in a cold sweat.

There were only a few of us who could do the full shift from right to left. Most of them fell off in faints before they reached the end. Several were badly injured, but no one seemed to care. When a man fell he was dragged aside by the waiting convicts, and a bucket of water was thrown over his head; then when he revived he was put back on the wheel. Some rebelled and refused to go on the wheel. These were made to do shot-drill, which was worse. When they refused to do shot-drill they were tied to a stake and lashed. There was little rebellion in that prison. Lashing was common, and often the courts ordered it as part of a convict's punishment. Africa still retained and used all the old primitive methods of punishment, and once inside those walls a man became nothing more than an animal.

The treadmill broke the hearts of most men, but it didn't break mine; instead it engendered in me a deep-seated hatred, a hatred which I still carry. I spent my silent, weary hours thinking out forms of revenge. I made many plans, among them was the blowing up of Government House, the murder of the public prosecutor, and the strangling of Sergeant Slater. I intended, when released, to do all the damage I could to the British, then get across and

join the Boers and help them drive the British out of Africa.

With a dogged stubbornness I determined that the treadmill should not best me, and I stuck it for three weeks—three weeks of mental and bodily anguish. Then one day the thermometer had climbed above a hundred by ten o'clock. I had finished my third shift on the wheel, and was half way through my fourth. My feet felt as though they were weighted with lead; some one was trying to wrench the iron rail from my hands; and a knife was cutting across my heart and lungs. A warm liquid filled my mouth. I spit it out. The man next to me yelled. Hands clutched me and dragged me down. Something inside had broken. I had a hemorrhage, and I guess I must have nearly bled to death. They carried me off to hospital, where I stayed for several days.

That was the end of the treadmill for me. Shortly afterward a British staff officer visited the prison and saw the treadmill in operation. I wasn't present at the time, but others told me that he raised the very devil about the inhumanity and brutality of it. He wrote to the governor of the colony, the Home Office, and I guess a number of papers; because there was a terrible furore, and the prison was besieged with people demanding that the treadmill be stopped. Finally they stopped it. As far as I can learn, that was the last time in history men have been made to serve on the treadmill. Even as a child I can remember hearing of the treadmill spoken of

as a relic of prison cruelty in the dark ages, and never dreamed I would serve on it.

The rest of my stay in prison, which was only a couple of weeks, was comparatively pleasant. Every one treated me with consideration. I was given only very light work to do, and the best food the prison had. Then one day a guard came smiling to me, and told me that Governor Heeley-Hutchinson had ordered my release.

"Guess you know now why we didn't want you to have another prison crop," he said, after he had congratulated me.

My hair had grown long beyond prison regulations, but the guards had been expecting my release, and were considerate enough to let me keep it long, so that I could get a decent hair-cut on the outside and not look like a jail-bird.

An escort came from the Mounted Police barracks, and marched me before the Commanding Officer, who formally told me that I was dishonorably discharged from the force. But that didn't worry me. My friends in the force took up a collection for me, and that night they gave a big blowout in my honor, at which I got gloriously drunk. For the time being I forgot all my hatred and thoughts of revenge, and the next day I enlisted in the Imperial Light Horse.

CHAPTER 8

Red Again

THE emotions of youth are seldom long lived, though often, as with my prison experience, they plant seeds in the heart which lie dormant for years and in later life spring to the surface; then they are deep-rooted and hard to eradicate. On being released from prison all my hatred and grievances were forgotten in the sheer joy of freedom. How wonderful the world seemed, and how good every one was to me.

After a night of wild debauch, in which I was toasted and held up as a martyred hero, I staggered a little uncertainly into the fair grounds to enlist in the Imperial Light Horse, which was the most famous of the Irregular Regiments. My history was well-known, and I made no attempt to hide my identity or my recent escapades. In all the notorious publicity I had been given there had been nothing but praise of my work as a soldier. I could ride and shoot, and had been thoroughly baptized by shell and rifle fire.

In a few days I was back on the veldt, with a good horse under me, a rifle at my side, and a pistol

hanging from my hip. The batch of details I was sent up with joined the regiment at Klerksdorp, from which we operated for several weeks. Shortly after our arrival another batch was sent up from the base, and among them I saw there were a number of Americans.

They were lined up in front of headquarters, and the sergeant was calling the roll.

All names were promptly answered until he called: "Summers"; then there was a silence, during which every one stared up and down the line.

"Summers!" again called the sergeant-major, "Any one here named Summers?"

There was no response.

Then: "John Harrington Summers!" called the sergeant-major.

My heart leaped. I looked down the line, and there, fourth from the end, stood Red.

"Summers! Summers! John Harrington Summers!" yelled the sergeant-major.

I slipped around the line and got behind Red.

"Answer your name, Red!" I said, and gave him a poke in the back.

"Hell's bells! Is that the name I gave?"

"Answer it, anyway."

"Here, sir!" shouted Red.

"Hi say, what's the matter with you, yer deaf?" The sergeant-major stuck his cockney chin in Red's face.

"It's my fault, sergeant-major. He's from my

home town, and I was talking to him." I came to Red's defense.

"Yeah, we went to school together," smiled Red.

"Yer did? I 'adn't 'eard that Witten 'ad ever went ter school." Then he glared at me. "You don't hinterfere with men on parade."

"Sorry, sir," I said, "but it's a long time since I seen any one from home."

He made no further remarks, and I stepped away from the line: but when the details were assigned Red was sent to my troop. Our Cockney sergeant-major was one of the finest men I have ever met, and before the war was over we became close friends.

Red and I were together again, a dangerous combination; and I felt sure that it would be only the very best of good luck that would keep one or both of us from going to jail.

"You gotta remember your name, Red," I said, after we were alone.

"Yeah, that's right."

He was as nonchalant as ever. I hadn't seen him since the day he had sailed for Cuba and I had been arrested on the docks at Tampa, yet though he had traveled ten thousand miles to be with me he showed no outward demonstration of pleasure. I was bubbling over, and plied him with a hundred questions. "How'd you know where I was, Red?"

"Oh, I read about you in the papers," he answered, "and headed for New Orleans to get a mule boat to follow you out. I'd have been here sooner, only I got

pinched in Baton Rouge, and got ninety days for mixing it with a shack."

Poor Red, I believe he spent nearly half his life in jail. But jail was part of his game of life; and I never heard him complain. In a few days he was a favorite in the regiment. Even the aloof British officers were inclined to greet him with a smile. Red was a good soldier—most hoboes are. He wrote the name he had enlisted under inside his hat, and soon answered to it promptly. But after a couple of weeks in the regiment he was seldom called anything but Red.

His keen senses and ready adaptability to any conditions made him a valuable man. Within a couple of months, though he had repeatedly robbed the quartermaster and the officers' mess, he appeared in orders as promoted to the rank of scout, which was the most desirable rank in the service, next to a commission, and many considered it preferable to a commission.

Red's promotion made things jake for me, and gave us both many chances of looting and cattle rustling. I can see now that playing a game was essential to the happiness of both of us. The scouts worked mostly in pairs, though at times they rode as lone wolves. It was easy enough for Red, when detailed for a reconnaisance that looked promising of loot, to get me assigned to go with him. Here was a great situation, two lawless hoboes riding the veldt in the uniform of Her Majesty Queen Victoria,

armed and equipped for fighting by Her Majesty's government. Well, we rode it to the limit, and probably looted more than any other hundred men put together.

Over the veldt roamed large herds of cattle. When the British could, they gathered them in; for they were food supplies and helped the Boers to prolong the war. Like all foods, beef had gone up to a high price, and there was a ready market for it down in Natal. Cattle rustling had become a richly paying game. While in the Mounted Police I had learned of the methods they were following in an attempt to stop lawless trafficking in cattle. Knowing the methods I was able to get around them; also I had learned a lot about the country, and the various passes through the mountains, and the "fences" who were ready to pay good prices for cattle.

Whenever we got down into the southeastern part of the Transvaal or the Eastern Free State, Red and I would hunt more for cattle than Boers, and when we found them would rustle them down country. It was dangerous work, and meant hard night riding, and the concocting of plausible alibis for our absence from the regiment.

Often when returning from the expeditions we would run onto large commandoes of Boers and have some really valuable information to bring in. On one occasion we returned to the regiment with three prisoners, and the horses and rifles of two more we had either killed or wounded. This was after we

had run over two hundred head of cattle into Natal and sold them at a good price.

One day Red and I were wandering through the streets of a small town on the Johannesburg line, when a staff officer rode by us, followed by an orderly. Both of them were mounted on beautiful Arab horses. Red puffed his cigarette silently, and into his face came that smile I knew so well and which meant he was planning some cussedness. His eyes kept on the riders till they turned into the billet of the town commandant.

"Come on," said Red, "that son of a blank doesn't need those horses. You and I can use them scouting for Her Majesty."

"Stow it, Red," I warned. "You can't get away with stealing a staff officer's private horses."

"The hell we can't. You and I are slated for patrol tonight, and those horses are going with us."

"Gee, Red, it'll mean a couple of years hard, if we're caught!"

"Yeah, if we're caught. But who's going to catch us?"

"He'll be hunting through every outfit in Africa, and those horses are too distinctly marked." One was a light sorrel with a white blaze and two white feet, the other was a gray. Both had flowing manes and tails.

"Leave it to me, Kid. When I get through with those horses their own mammies won't know them."

I had some doubts, though my confidence in Red

was still strong. Our regiment was camped on the east edge of the town. After dark Red and I rode out to patrol north along the railroad, which the Boers were blowing up whenever they got a chance. This was an all-night job; we were supposed to ride back and forth between the place where we were camped and the next town, a distance of several miles. Instead we circled the town, picketed our horses in an orchard, and went on foot to the stable of the staff officer. It stood out behind a large house. When we got there at about eight o'clock we could see the officers dining in a room upstairs, and the servants and grooms gathered around a table in a room below. There was plenty to drink on both tables, which meant that we would have a clear field for an hour or more.

We put bridles on the Arabs, then mounted them bareback, and rode boldly through the town to where we had left our horses in an orchard. Then we saddled the Arabs and, leading our own horses, rode out onto the veldt. Red had made careful and complete plans. For about fifteen miles we kept steadily to the north, circling around one town; three miles beyond we came to a Kaffir kraal; here we stopped.

A bunch of mongrel dogs came yipping out at us, and several tousled black heads were stuck cautiously out of the straw huts. I spotted the headman and called him out.

"Hey, Enduna," I called, "homba loppa." Meaning, come here.

He came cautiously, not knowing whether we were friends or enemies, and raised his hand in salute.

I had learned a smattering of Kaffir and could make myself understood.

"Tell him he has to take care of these horses till we come back," said Red, "and that if he doesn't, we'll kill him. But if he does, we'll give him two gold sovereigns."

Red held out the gold pieces for the Kaffir to see, and I interpreted in kitchen Kaffir what he had said.

"Longela!" (All right) said the Enduna, and I could see he was trembling.

"Here, give him a quid in advance," said Red, and I passed a gold sovereign to the Enduna. Then he called two young Kaffirs to take the horses.

"Ask him for a bucket of water, and something we can use for a sponge," said Red, and from his saddle wallet he pulled out a package of Condis Fluid, which he had foraged from the quartermaster that evening. He also had a pair of horse clippers and a large pair of scissors.

While the Kaffirs held them we cut the Arabs' tails off square to the dock, hogged their manes, and bathed them in Condis Fluid until they were both a dark brown, and there were no white markings of any kind on them. This required about three hours' hard work. After which we had to ride like the devil to get back to camp by daylight.

Luck was with us. On the return journey we spotted a group of Boers laying a mine to blow up

the morning train. This was about three miles from camp. While Red stayed behind to watch them, and flag the train, which left Standerton at daylight, I rode hell bent for election to camp, and called out the regiment.

Red flagged the train, which backed up, and got away with only a few bullets through its windows. We met Red heading back for camp with about thirty Boers after him, firing as they rode. Red was stretched along his horse's back like a lizard on a fence. Those Boers were so mad, and so determined to get him, that four of them rode right into us before they realized we were about. Altogether it was a good night's work, and Red got commended for his good scouting.

The following evening the regiment was lined up to hear orders. This was only done when they had something unusual to inform us about. Ordinarily we were never bothered with unnecessary formations.

When we were formed into a hollow square the sergeant-major read an order from the town commandant, announcing the theft of his Arab horses, giving a detailed description of them, and offering a reward of one hundred pounds for the arrest of the person or persons who stole them. Again Red and I had a reward offered for our arrest. But what a glorious alibi we had. All the night during which they had been stolen we were out patroling, and our work in stopping the wrecking of the train proved that we had done our duty.

When we were alone Red laughed, and told me he had information that we would march north in a couple of days, and then we would pick up the Arabs. This information, like most that he gathered, proved right. We pulled out one night just after dark, and Red and I were detailed for scouting duty on the right flank. Again luck was with us. The line of march brought us within a half a mile of the Kaffir kraal where we had left the Arabs. When we neared the place Red left me to guard the flank alone, and rode off at a tangent, toward the kraal. An hour later I found him at the foot of a kopje we both knew, waiting for me. He had one of the Arabs saddled and helped me saddle the other; then we continued scouting.

The regiment halted just before daybreak, then we rode into camp, each leading a horse. Red told the Squadron commander that we had found a couple of strays on the veldt and wanted to keep them. This was a privilege granted to any man in the regiment. If he found and captured a horse he liked better than the one he had, he was allowed to turn the other in as a remount.

Those Arabs were wonderful horses. I rode mine for three weeks; then one morning he stuck his foot in an ant-bear hole and broke his leg; so I had to shoot him. Red had his for several days longer. We were taking part in an immense drive to corner Christian de Wet. At the end of it the various commands came together on the Vaal River, but when

we closed in, all we had of de Wet's commando was a few empty ox wagons.

That night we camped alongside of an Australian regiment, and in the morning Red's Arab was missing.

"That's a lousy trick, stealing a man's horse," said Red.

I couldn't help kidding him a bit. It was rather a rich joke for any one to steal from Red. But he only smiled his old enigmatical smile, and I felt sorry for the man who had taken the Arab.

The columns lay at rest all that day and the next day. Then we with the Australians marched back and camped near Standerton. Here we went into rest for several days.

Red had ridden off soon after breakfast and I hadn't seen him all day. Late in the afternoon I was lying on the ground with my head propped up against a saddle, and reading Rider Haggard's "Jess", when Red came and threw a folded slip of paper to me.

"Something to put in the bank at Joburg," he said.

We had a joint bank account in Johannesburg, where we were putting money we gathered from cattle rustling and gambling.

I opened the paper and looked, it was a check for one hundred pounds.

"What's this?" I asked.

"The reward for the fellow who stole the staff Johnny's horse. You see, I was able to take him and

show him the thieving Australian who had his Arab." He laughed. "A fellow ain't got no right to steal from a poor soldier."

"What's happened to him?"

"They got him up in the hoosgow. But they won't be able to convict him because his regiment hasn't been in this vicinity before."

When they brought the Australian up for trial his commanding officer came forward and pointed out that he couldn't have stolen the horse, and that he found him on the veldt as he said he had done. So the Australian got off; and the staff Johnny was out his hundred pounds as well as a horse.

Some months after this, when I had been promoted to a scout, and was entitled to an extra horse, we camped one night beside a yeomanry regiment that had just arrived from England and had some mighty fine horses, I called my Kaffir servant and told him to go into their lines and get me a good mount, and he did.

We marched at two o'clock the next morning. Though nothing was ever said about it, and to-day any officer of that time would probably deny such a thing, our officers found it very much less trouble and a quicker way to equip the regiment by letting it camp for a night beside a yeomanry regiment than to indent for stores through the regular channels, which usually meant waiting and a lot of red tape.

That morning my servant had a beautiful horse saddled for me. In the darkness I couldn't tell what

color it was and didn't care; but it felt wonderful under me, all muscle and full of pep, also sure-footed, and smoothly gaited. All night I rode with the column, but just before daybreak I was ordered to report to the colonel for scouting duty.

"Ride to the left and make reconnaisance a mile out; stay out till the column halts; then come in with a report to me," he ordered.

I rode off into the gray dawn, and for an hour kept approximately a mile on the flank of the column; then from the side of a kopje I saw them halt, and rode in as instructed.

Drawing rein beside the colonel, I reported: "Small band of Boers with three wagons a mile and a half on our left front, traveling northeast toward the Magaliesbergs, sir."

Daylight had broken clear, and the sun was half an hour high. The colonel was staring at me in a way I didn't understand.

"Where in thunder did you get that horse?" he demanded.

"I found him wandering on the veldt, sir."

"The devil you did! He belongs to me!"

Here was a pretty mess, and for the moment I was tongue-tied and could only sit there and gape.

"I had that horse shipped to me from Cape Town, and you take him before I even have a chance to try him. In future, do your commandeering outside the regiment." Then he smiled, and I knew he wasn't going to have me on the mat.

"He's a splendid ride, sir," I took courage and said.

"Oh, he is, is he?" Again the colonel smiled.

"Will you take him now, sir?"

"No, keep him until we camp. Now lead on and show us these Boers."

Our colonel was a good fellow, and knew how to handle the roughnecks he commanded. One night Botha attacked our camp, and the firing was fairly heavy. Being a scout I didn't have to turn out unless I wanted to. That was one of the privileges of being a scout. When in camp we had nothing to do; our work was scouting and nothing else. But at times, when they were short-handed, we would volunteer for picket duty, and things of that sort.

My squadron commander was great on his morning bath, and when water was plentiful always had his servant keep a tub ready for him. I was going into the firing line leisure, when along come the colonel taking big strides. He didn't see the tub of water and fell right into it. Like a fool I laughed out loud as he floundered to his feet.

"Who are you?" he demanded.

Then I laughed again, and he ran toward me; but I dodged in behind some wagons. The firing became heavier; so the colonel left me, and went to attend to more important things. I never heard anything more about this, and never mentioned it in the regiment. Afterwards I was ashamed of having laughed at so fine a man. I hope, if he is still alive, he will read

this, and know that I never held anything but the highest respect for him.

Perhaps the wildest and most foolhardy thing we ever attempted was the holding up of the Mounted Police with the hut and dog taxes in northern Natal. The idea was proposed by a man who was a younger son of the British nobility; I have heard since that he has inherited a title and an enormous fortune, and is now prominent in England, but at the time he was a trooper in the I. L. H., and a wild dare-devil. In the I. L. H. we messed in small groups, drew our rations uncooked, and cooked them ourselves with the aid of Kaffir servants. Our mess consisted of six most of the time. Red and I had just naturally drifted toward kindred spirits, but it was many months before we let the others know of our cattle rustling and horse stealing. In time we learned that they were attempting the same things we were doing, and gradually we let them into our confidence.

It was then that Dal, the young nobleman, proposed that we all go on leave to Natal and pull this wild stunt. The others in this were Sonny, Dan, and Chic. These were the nicknames under which they went. I am purposely keeping their real names dark because, as far as I know, they may still be living under the British flag and liable to arrest for what they did. All but Dan; he got a packet in the raid, and died on the Tugela.

We were all due for leave, and as I had helped in the collection and escorting of the taxes, I knew just

about when they would be taking them down country to Greytown. They were always in copper, silver and gold, and amounted to several thousand pounds. Our plan was an extravagant one, and now I wonder that Red consented to go into it. As for me, I hadn't sense enough to know what was plausible and what wasn't.

At Maritzburg we went to a theatrical costumer's and secured false beards and civilian coats. I don't mean that we either bought them or hired them; we simply broke into the place at night and took them. Then we went by train to Greytown, arriving there in the afternoon. I knew most of the Police on the post and so did Sonny, who served three years with them before the war. We chummed around with the Police, and learned from them that we were five days early for the taxes. They told us that a sergeant we all hated was bringing them in with four young recruits.

When the time came we told the police we were going south to Maritzburg, and after dark set out on a twenty mile hike across country. There were a number of Dutch farmers in that vicinity who were loyal to neither the British nor the Boers. These we intended to raid. The Boers had made several raids further north and to the east, but had not gone far beyond the Tugela.

We reached the farm where we intended to raid first at about four o'clock in the morning. Putting on our false whiskers, we went to the barn and took out four horses, all that were worth riding. While we

were saddling them up the dogs made an awful row barking, and the Dutchman came running out with a rifle in his hand, only to be met by Sonny and Chic, who both talk Dutch fluently.

"Oop haands!" demanded Sonny, sticking his pistol into the Dutchman's ribs.

Whereupon the Dutchman declared with much emphasis that he was loyal Boer and ready to do anything they wanted. Sonny asked him if he had any more rifles, and he showed us where he had a dozen Mausers, with belts and a munition hidden against the time when the Boers should arrive in that part of the country. Sonny told him that we were the advance of Botha's army and had been captured by the British, but had escaped. That Botha, Smuts, and De Wet were all coming back into Natal, and were going to drive the British into the sea.

He rejoiced with us over the victories Sonny and Chic told him the Boers had had recently, and offered to give us breakfast, but we told him we didn't dare to linger in the neighborhood, and assuring him he would be paid for his horses and guns, we rode away, I riding behind Red, and Dan up behind Dal. In this fashion we made a good two miles before we stopped and raided another farmer. This time we not only took his horses, but set fire to his barn, and as daylight had come, fired shots toward him and his sons, to keep them indoors, and far enough away from us, so that they couldn't see that our whiskers were false. After that we shot up a few farms and

burned several barns, leaving empty Mauser cartridges about to make it appear like a real raid. But I am sure we didn't actually hurt any one, and I hope we didn't.

By this time we had reached the edge of the Lower Tugela Valley. Here we turned southeast and rode hard for twenty-five miles to the place on the Greytown road where we intended to stage the hold-up. This was the last outspanning place before reaching Greytown. We arrived there late in the afternoon, and could see the tax convoy, which consisted of an ox-wagon, with two native drivers, and an escort of five Mounted Policemen.

Dal had brought along a bottle of doped whisky, which he put, with some other junk, in a pair of saddle wallets and laid them in plain view in the road, as if they had been dropped there by some careless farmer. A couple of drinks each from that bottle would knock all the fight out of any man, and we wanted to do the thing with as little trouble as possible.

The outspanning place was in a basin near water and surrounded by hills. While Dan held our horses under cover of a kopje—the rest of us took up positions among the rocks, where we could fire into the camp and stampede the oxen. Also we were sure that the Kaffirs would run.

We saw the sergeant, who was riding in advance with one of the young recruits, stop when they came to the saddle wallets. The youngest got off his horse

and handed the wallets up to the sergeant; then they rode on. It looked as though our plan wasn't going to work for the sergeant didn't even look inside the bags. He just threw them across his horse's neck, and rode ahead.

When they reached camp the natives outspanned the oxen, and turned them loose to graze. The sergeant ordered the troopers to take his own and their horses down to water. They wanted one man to stay behind and supervise the natives in getting the evening meal ready; but he told them to do as they were told and not to argue.

His game was plain enough. He had discovered the whisky and didn't want them to see him taking a drink. Drinking on duty in the Mounted Police was a serious offense.

When the troopers had gone off with the horses the sergeant pulled the cork from the bottle and took a long swig. For a few minutes he abused the Kaffirs; which to Sonny and me sounded very natural —that sergeant was a bullying skunk. After swaggering around for a minute or two he went back to the bottle and took another long swig. In a few moments he sat down beside his saddle; then we saw his head begin to sag. He straightened himself with a jerk, got up and staggered around; then came back for another swig. This last did the trick, but it also did for the bottle. As he flopped over on his face he turned the uncorked bottle upside down, and the whisky spilled out on the ground.

Here was the first flaw in our plans. We hadn't counted on the sergeant's canny selfishness. Not one of the troopers had had a drink and all of them were cold sober; which meant trouble in staging the hold-up. They had left their carbines behind when they went to water their horses, but all had their pistols.

There was nothing to do but open fire, stampede the oxen, and try to force the troopers into surrender.

But these fellows were real men, and put up a game fight. We let drive with our Mausers, and shot among the oxen, which stampeded them. The Kaffirs took it on the run, and the troopers made for their carbines and flattened down on the ground. Thank goodness they were bum shots. But they were game. We spattered bullets all around them; and called on them to surrender. But there was no surrender in them. This pseudo scrap went on for half an hour; then a warning call from Red made us all look toward the south; there, coming at a dead gallop, was a whole squadron of cavalry.

Now we were in a pickle. There was nothing we could do but take it on the run. We raced for our horses, and tore off across the veldt as hard as we could make them go. The sun was sinking, and soon darkness would come. The cavalry had heard our firing and were spreading out, and spurring their horses forward in an attempt to surround us. If we could keep ahead of them until dark came, we might

reach the rough country of the Tugela and lose them.

The troopers ran to the top of a hill and kept bullets flying around us as we rode off. We had a good start of the cavalry and for a couple of miles kept well in the lead. Then on our left front we saw another troop bearing down on us from the northwest. They were within rifle range, and half of them dismounted and sent volleys after us. These fellows were old soldiers and better shots than the young troopers. We veered off toward the east; but a dozen well-mounted men, whose horses were fresher than ours, were gaining on us every moment. But darkness was coming, and the African night comes rapidly once it starts. This saved us for the time being.

Dal, who was acting in command of the expedition, told us to separate into pairs. He and Chic rode straight ahead, Sonny and Dan made off to the left, I stuck to Red and we headed straight for the coast. This proved a wise move.

Soon we realized that our horses were done for. Ahead of us was a farm, lying in a snug hollow. We urged them on until we reached an outer pasture. Here we stripped them of their saddles and turned them loose, inside the pasture. The saddles we hid in a clump of bushes. If we had left the horses on the open veldt, the cavalry might have found them; then they would have combed that district until they found us. As it was they thought we had ridden on. Being free of our horses we flattened out among

some rocks, and lay there until the cavalry galloped passed us; then we doubled back and lost them.

All that night we tramped across the veldt. Several times we were forced to lie low until troops passed us. The country was alive with troops. News of the raid had brought out everything for miles around. Fortunately for us they believed we were Boers, and were heading back toward the Transvaal. By daylight we were fairly safe, but would have had difficulty in explaining our presence in that part of the country. We had thrown away our disguises, but thought it best not to attempt to travel in daylight; besides we were dog tired. Both of us were used to long hours in the saddle, and several nights without sleep was a common thing; but the last thirty-six hours had been unusually hard. As the sun appeared above the horizon we crawled in among some rocks on a small kopje, and were soon fast asleep.

When I woke again the sun was so low in the sky that for a moment I couldn't determine whether it was rising or setting. It was at about the same height that it had been when I went to sleep. I woke Red and asked him what he thought.

"She's going down, Silly," he said. "That's the west over there, and I guess it's time we were hiking." As always, his smile gave me courage.

We got up and shook ourselves. I was famished with both hunger and thirst, and I guess Red was too, though he didn't say anything about it.

Down in a donga we found water, and drank our

fill; then we tramped for a couple of miles and came to a farm house.

"You wait here," said Red, and left me at the corner of an orchard while he went in to forage. He always did the ticklish work himself.

Soon he returned with several eggs and a live chicken. He had the chicken under his arm, and was holding one hand over its head, so that it couldn't squawk.

We broke the eggs and swallowed them raw. This made us feel better, and we walked on until we were well away from the house. Then Red wrung the chicken's neck, and we skinned it and ate it raw—we didn't dare to light a fire. That raw chicken was one of the best feeds I have ever had.

It took us four nights to reach Pietermaritzburg. During this time we came to regard raw chicken as a great delicacy; though times we were able to vary this diet with milk and fruit.

After we reached Maritzburg we cleaned up, had a good feed, and then went out to the Mounted Police Headquarters—just for a friendly visit.

Of course there was much talk of the raid, and we learned that no prisoners had been taken. This was a relief, for if any of the bunch had been caught, the game would have been up for the rest of us, and we would have had to get out of the country. Red and I made our plans to get down to Durban and ship out before the mast on anything we could find that would take us to another part of the world. For sev-

eral days we waited, dividing our time between our hotel and Police Headquarters.

Dal and Chic were the first to come in. They had left their horses as we had, and had doubled back through the lines; but had had a harder time getting down country, because they had stuck to the roads, not knowing the country as well as I did. Sonny was the last to come in, and Dan never came back. An unlucky shot got him. Sonny had carried him into a cave in the Tugela Valley and for two days he had tried to save his pal's life; but Dan was shot through the stomach, which is generally hopeless, unless expert surgical aid can be secured at once.

Sonny said that he had removed all identification from Dan and buried him in the Valley. As far as I know Dan still lies in an unmarked and unknown grave. Dan, whose time had expired, was entitled to discharge; so Chic, who looked the nearest like him of the bunch, went to the base at Maritzburg and, representing himself as Dan, asked for discharge. We didn't want Dan to be listed as a deserter. We sent his discharge to his people in England. This was the best we could do for him.

CHAPTER 9

The Fourth of July on the Veldt

WE were operating around the Bethlehem district, which was about sixty miles from Harrismith. At the time the regiment was much depleted in numbers, we had had a great many casualties, and a lot of time expired men had taken their discharge. Information was brought in of a Boer commando, about six hundred strong, escorting a large herd of cattle, horses, and wagons into the Drakensburg, where De Wet was supposed to have his headquarters. We were between three and four hundred strong; with two pom-poms and two twelve pounder guns. But the colonel decided to attack this convoy and get fresh meat for the regiment.

We marched all night, and took up a commanding position at the entrance to a mountain pass. Shortly after daylight the Boer column appeared. They must have felt pretty certain that there were no Roi Necks about, because they marched right in between us, and we opened fire at a wonderful advantage. We had hoped to stampede them and cause them to bolt and leave their cattle. Instead they put up a bit of a fight, and, misjudging our numbers, hoisted a white flag and surrendered.

This was the best haul we made during the war. There were about six hundred prisoners, twelve thousand head of cattle, a number of wagons, and nearly a thousand head of horses. All we had hoped to get was fresh meat.

We marched at once for Harrismith, and messengers were sent ahead to ask for help in bringing in this large capture. Lord Kitchener, then in supreme command of the African forces, was so pleased he ordered the cattle sold, and the money divided among the I. L. H. This of course took several weeks of negotiating, and many of the men put little stock in the promise made to us of the big bounty coming. Some sold their chances for as low as ten shillings, others in varying amounts up to five pounds. When the checks came through they were for twenty-one pounds and ten shillings.

While we were escorting the prisoners to Harrismith we had to halt and camp for the night on several occasions, for it was slow work driving the cattle. We were talking with a group one night around a fire, and the conversation turned to treachery.

"There's one scoundrel I want to get my hands on," said a burly young Boer. "That's the fellow that murders men up in the Drakensburg."

Then he told us of mysterious killings, and described Death Pass. I asked him what his theory was; but he had none, except that he was sure it was a Roi Neck.

"You're wrong," I said. "It's something more terrible."

Then I told them about the death of Jonesy and Travers, and the native runner, and others. This seemed to stump them, and his report of killings by the Black Terror added further mystery to the greatest horror of the war. The Boers are a superstitious race, and so are the British for that matter. A profound silence followed our talk, and soon the conversation was taken along other lines. No one seemed inclined to discuss this midnight prowler, who murdered silently, and seemed to have supernatural powers.

From Harrismith we went into the Potchestroom district. Here my squadron was left behind, why I never knew; but we lay there for several weeks, while the rest of the regiment was out on the drives. We had nothing to do but enjoy ourselves.

There was a little dark-eyed girl who waited on table in a tea room in Potchestroom. She was a Boer girl, but I went nutty about her, though she never knew it. I didn't know what to say to her, or how to begin making love. When she came near my table, all fluffy frills and spotlessly clean and surrounded by a faintly perceptible perfume that was so delicate I could never determine what it was, I went all of a dither, and couldn't say a word. Once her soft little hand touched mine—I guess it was an accident, though the feel lingered there for several moments—I just felt my blood racing like mad, and everything

in the room began to move. Then she smiled at me, and I felt like a damn fool.

But it was different with Red; he always had a bright line of patter for her, and I could soon see that she hadn't any use for any one else when Red was around. I never saw the woman Red couldn't handle about as he wanted to. Every fellow that came in the tea room tried to make the little waitress. But Red was king-pin all the time, and some of the fellows began getting jealous. I was jealous too, but it didn't make me like Red any the less.

The Coldstream Guards were doing the Military Police Duty of the town, and they were trying to make her too. Red used to slip out of camp at night, and I guessed he was meeting the waitress. The town was under martial law and no one was allowed out after dark; but that didn't make any difference to Red. All he needed to know was where the girl lived, and he'd find a way to get there, police or no police. The Coldstreams were sure he was seeing her at night, and were laying for him; but could never catch him. It made them sore because they couldn't go into her house, and yet they were sure he was in there, and they would hang about for hours.

One of them tried high-handed methods to make the girl come across. He told her that if she didn't, he would make the tea room people fire her. She said he couldn't, and he said he could, that he'd frame them and report them for selling liquor to the troops. This fellow persecuted the girl a lot and got her all

scared up. But she was game and never peeped. Then the Coldstream went to the proprietress of the tea room and told her that unless she fired the girl he was going to close the tea room. That finished him.

The proprietress tackled the girl to find out what it was all about, and the girl broke down and cried and spilled her story. In the midst of her crying Red and I came in, and soon Red had the story.

"When's this Johnny coming back?" asked Red, lighting a cigaret.

"He'll come in some time to-day, but he won't come if there's any one around," said the girl.

"Oh, that's it, hey? Well, there won't be any one around. We'll just wait in the back, and you can tip us off when he comes."

Red's eyes were sparkling, and he wore his smile that spelled trouble.

The proprietress said that if we were seen coming from the back of the place, he'd really have something on her, and she'd be made to close. But Red set her mind at rest.

"We won't be seen coming from the back," he told her. "We'll come in from the front."

For a couple of hours we sat in a small room in the back. Red said we'd better not smoke, because girls didn't smoke in those days, and the smell of tobacco smoke in there would have been evidence of their having had men in behind. So we just sat and looked at each other.

"He's outside, scouting around to see if there's any one here," the girl whispered to us.

"Any one in the tea room?" asked Red.

"A couple of Tommies. They'll go in a few minutes; then he'll come in."

In a few minutes we heard the Tommies kidding the girl as they were leaving; a silence of several minutes followed; the proprietress came and beckoned to us to follow her.

"He's in there now talking to Kitty," she said, and showed us out the back.

I followed Red around the house, and we stepped into the tea room so quietly that the Coldstream didn't hear us. His back was toward the door; and his six feet two was towering over Kitty like a big ape. She was backed up against the wall, and white as a snowflake. In her eyes was abject terror. That moment I could have stuck a knife in the Coldstream and enjoyed seeing him die.

"This is the last chance you're going to get," he snarled at the girl.

Red signaled me to stop by the door.

"Last chance for what?" asked Red, stepping up behind the startled M. P.

For a moment the M. P. stood and glared; then, taking courage from Red's size, he sneered; "None of your damned business!"

"Oh, ain't it?"

Red's fist shot out, and I could see that the Coldstream was yellow. But he had to do something, and

he put up a fight. Then Red mixed it with him in true hobo fashion. He was all over the Coldstream, kicking, gouging, strangling. The Coldstream tried to run out the door, I kicked him in the stomach, and knocked his wind out; then he backed away and fell over a table. Red pounced on his chest and drove one thumb into his wind-pipe, and battered his face with the other hand. When the Coldstream lay quiet Red got up, and stood looking at him. Kitty was standing against the wall, trembling like a frightened bird in a cage full of snarling cats. All the brute had come to the top in both Red and me.

"Get some water," panted Red to the proprietress, who had rushed into the room.

In a moment she was back with a big pitcher. Red took it from her, raised it to his lips, took a long swig; then dashed the rest into the face of the Coldstream. The shock of the cold water brought him to, and he sat up; then he staggered to his feet, and Red signaled me to let him out.

"You'll pay for this!" he gasped, when he was safely outside.

Red just grinned. I was a bit nervous, and told him we'd better beat it for camp.

"Camp, hell," said Red, and sat down at a table.

"Come on, sister." He turned to the trembling girl. "Let's have some tea."

"Aren't you afraid he will have you arrested?" asked the girl. "Please, you boys go to your camp. He will come back, and bring other men with him!"

"Sure he will," laughed Red, "But we don't care, do we, Kid?"

"Hell, no!" I said, sitting down at the table. But just the same I was shaking at the knees, and wished that Red would beat it.

The proprietress brought the tea. Like Kitty, she was all wrought up and told us to go; yet I believe she was glad we didn't and felt safer while we stayed.

Kitty finally broke down and cried, and the older woman led her into the back; then Red and I sat alone and drank our tea, and waited for the return of our enemy in force. I was hoping that some of the I. L. H. would come along, and kept watching through the door, in case any of them passed by. Red was gabbing about everything and nothing, and I was paying little attention to what he was saying. The overturned table still lay with its legs sticking up in the air, and I made a mental plan for my line of attack, when the fight commenced.

We hadn't long to wait. Soon the Coldstream returned with a sergeant and another M. P., all of them over six feet tall.

"That's them!" the Coldstream pointed at us. "They both attacked me at once!"

"You're both under arrest," said the sergeant. "Come along."

I reckon he'd never handled American hoboes before, and got quite a surprise out of what happened.

Red dashed a cup of scalding tea in the sergeant's face, and I flattened the M. P.'s nose with a sugar

bowl. Then we each tore loose a table leg from the upturned table, and laid about them before they could recover from the first shock. But these fellows weren't yellow and I reckon Red and I would have got the worst of it, if a couple of the Dublin Fusiliers hadn't happened to come along. They saw the fight from the street, and naturally came in, and of course, the M. P. badges on the arms of our enemies told them who to hit. In a couple of minutes, with the aid of the Dublins, we had the Coldstreams on the run.

But that was just the beginning of things. The next morning a detachment of M. P.'s came out to our camp to arrest Red and me. We'd told our story, and the boys told us to keep in the background; then they rushed the M. P.'s and threw them into a sluice of water that was about four feet deep.

For several days after that every time a Coldstream and an I. L. H. met they mixed, and there were some beautiful fights. Most of the Coldstreams were game, and some of our fellows got nasty beatings. Soon the thing got so bad that the commanding officers got together to see what could be done. Red and I were sent for, and told our story before the officers of both regiments. Then they summoned the girl and the proprietress of the tea room, who verified our story.

The Coldstream officers were in a fury when they learned what one of their men had been doing, and when the men of the Coldstreams learned the truth, they tried to lynch the fellow who had brought dis-

grace on their regiment. After that we had an armistice, and the Coldstreams became our good pals.

Kitty had a little friend, whom I came to like better than Kitty, and Red and I used to visit them several nights a week. But that is another story. The thing is, we never had to worry about the M. P.'s; they were all our pals, and we went about Potchestroom day or night, as we pleased.

"Say, Kid, know what day tomorrow is?" asked Red. We were idling around the camp.

"Nope," I replied, "what is it?" I lost track of time a great deal in those days; for time meant little to me.

"It's the grand and glorious Fourth, and we ought to celebrate."

"That's an idea. What'll we do?"

"Let's go to Dead-eye Dick and get him to give us an order for extra beer; then call in all the Yanks and have a party?"

Every new detail of recruits for the past year had brought in a number of Americans. Having come over on the horse and mule boats from New Orleans, they called themselves Canadians and enlisted. The I. L. H., owing to its fame, was a favorite of the Americans, and at the time, which was July, 1901, we were more than twenty-five per cent Americans —among them two American Indians.

Dead-eye Dick was our squadron commander; he was one of the Jameson Raid men, and had had an eye shot out in the early days of the war. Red and I,

as a self-appointed delegation, approached him on the subject of beer.

"You know, sir," smiled Red, "tomorrow is a day very near to the hearts of every American. We'd like to celebrate, and want some extra beer."

There was a brewery in Potchestroom from which we were allowed to buy one quart of beer a day. But one quart per man doesn't go far in a celebration. After some talk, Dead-eye gave us a permit for all the beer we wanted. Then he issued orders that no American was to be arrested for the next forty-eight hours for anything short of murder.

Dead-eye Dick, whose real name was Donaldson, was another prince of a man that I met on the veldt. The next day he made us a present of a case of whisky to help with our celebration.

We went to the quartermaster and got permission to use a large marquee that had been put up for recreational purposes, but had no furniture in it. Then we went to the brewery to order the beer. The brewery had the beer and was willing to let us have it; but they had no kegs or barrels. But this didn't faze us. We called together all the Americans and told them what we intended to do, and sent them out scouting for receptacles. They gathered buckets, wash-tubs, dixies, and cooking pots; and we had beer a-plenty.

As we had a number of friends in both the Dublin Fusiliers and the Coldstream Guards, we invited a number from each of these regiments, and on the

night of the Fourth the marquee was packed. Every man had brought his own pannikin. We supplied the beer and the candles. The whisky wouldn't have gone far in this mob; so we emptied it into a wash-tub and mixed it with the beer.

It was a great party. We had songs and recitations, and funny stories. Several fellows did clog steps, and one man rattled the bones. Everything went serenely. My job was keeping the pannikins filled, and it was quite a job.

Soon the whiskied beer began to talk. Some of them got a little thick-tongued. But there wasn't a dead moment. Good and bad contributions to the evening's entertainment were given loud applause: then a Dublin Fusilier rose to his feet and proposed a toast to:

"Our hosts and the Fort o' July."

Every one, who could, rose to his feet.

"Phwat I want to know is," asked another, "phwat in the hell is this Fort o' July about anyhow?"

"The Fort o' July," volunteered another, "is the day that Americky licked hell out of England!"

"You're a bloody liar!" This from a Coldstream. "England was never licked."

Then the argument became heated, until Muldoon, famous boxer of the Dublin Fusiliers, demanded attention.

"Gintelmen," he said, when he had gained silence, "we're going to have pace and quiet at this gathering out of respict for our hosts and the occasion. I

tell you that the Fort o' July is the day that Americky licked hell out o' England!"

"You're a bloody liar!" and a pannikin half filled with beer caught Muldoon on the side of the head.

Then the fight commenced, and every man turned and punched his neighbor. Soon the lights went out. I got a few clouts and gave a few; but it really wasn't the fight of the I. L. H. The argument was between the Coldstreams and Fusiliers, and we, in a sense, were the bones of contention. I decided that I'd get out and let them have the scrap to themselves; so made my way to the edge of the canvas.

I'd hardly got outside when I heard one of the poles crack, and the whole marquee caved in. In the moonlight the canvas looked like a prehistoric monster in convulsions; and the air was filled with the swearing of every dialect of the English language.

Soon others crawled out from under the canvas. Some had lost their coats and shirts, some their pants, and some everything. All of them had battered faces. One man tried to be smart, and put a bucket over his head for a helmet. In the scrimmage the bucket got pulled backward and the bale got fastened across his neck. He rolled out from the marquee and flopped about on the ground like a chicken with its head off. It took several of us to hold him while we loosened the bale.

Finally, when quiet had come, Muldoon crawled out. His cap, coat and shirt were gone, and one trouser leg. Standing in the moonlight he shook his

fist, and challenged the whole condemned I. L. H. to fight. In the beginning he had been our champion, and we all decided to let him continue as such. Besides, every one had all the fight he wanted for one evening. Seeing he could get no response from us, he strode across to the officers' lines and rattled the flap of Donaldson's tent.

Donaldson stuck his head out, and cast his one optic on Muldoon.

"Airr you Dead-eye Dick?" asked Muldoon.

"I believe that's what the boys call me," said the Captain.

"Well I've licked yer whole damned regiment, come out here an' I'll lick you!"

Donaldson looked at him for a moment and thought; then he said: "As you know I've only got one eye, and can't see well to fight after dark. You come around tomorrow morning at nine o'clock and I'll fight you."

"Fair enough, sir, fair enough," said Muldoon. "I'll fight you at nine o'clock in the mornin'."

Then he staggered away.

The next morning Muldoon and others came over looking for their clothes. When we told him about his arranged fight with our commanding officer, he decided that his clothes could go to the devil and he beat it back to his own camp.

Every one said it was the best party the I. L. H. ever gave.

CHAPTER 10

I Become a Scout

IN spite of the fact that I was the youngest one in the regiment, or in the army for that matter, I found myself classed as one of the old hands. There was no conscription during the Boer War, and irregular regiments, like the Imperial Light Horse, enlisted men for six month periods. At the end of six months we could take a month's leave on full pay and reënlist for another four months. Some refused to reënlist, and just continued in the service, and had the privilege of taking their discharge whenever they wanted to.

Our Colonel often said that he considered a man who had ridden the veldt with the regiment for six months worth a dozen new men. That was one of the reasons why we were treated differently from ordinary soldiers. Most of us could leave when we wanted to, and those who were time-expired were the most valuable men. We seldom saluted an officer, we never drilled, and when we came into towns along the line of communication we left the care of our horses to our native servants and enjoyed ourselves.

I remember once we camped outside of Johannes-

burg. Red and Chic and I were doing the town, and trying to find out which pub sold the best liquor. It was hard to decide, because all of them were pretty good. When we had reached a point where we didn't care a damn, we met a young lieutenant, just out from England. The London fog still hung about him; yet he was very much aware of the fact that he held a commission in Her Majesty's army.

I say we met him. The fact is, we didn't know of his existence until he stopped us and demanded to know why we hadn't saluted him.

Red took a half-crown from his pocket and stuck it in his eye as a monocle; then looked him up and down critically.

"My deah boy," he drawled, "does your mamma know you are out?"

"None of your insolence!" said the youngster. "I'll have you arrested." His pink cheeks became almost crimson, and he tried to set his hairless lip in a line of determination.

"Now, now, sonny, don't lose your temper. Nice boys never pout. You run home and play with your marbles."

Chic and I were leaning against a wall, and laughing like a pair of fools. There were no M. P.'s about and the young subaltern didn't know what to do. But he tried to bluff it out.

"You men are under arrest," he said. "Now follow me!"

He walked away with great dignity, and for a

moment we stood and looked at him; then we continued on down the street where there was a pub whose concoctions we hadn't yet tried. As we went in the pub we looked up the street, and there stood our subaltern, watching us.

We had reached about the fourth round of drinks when the door swung open and in marched the subaltern followed by a sergeant and half a dozen M. P.'s. I looked at Red to see if we were going to fight or allow ourselves to be arrested. But Red was telling a yarn to the bar-maid and seemed indifferent to what was going on.

"These are the men, sergeant, arrest them!" said the officer and the M. P.'s lined up alongside of us.

"Fall in!" demanded the sergeant.

Again I looked at Red, and Chic was looking from one to the other.

"Well, so long, sweety," said Red, blowing a kiss to the girl, who was laughing. "My staff has arrived, and I see I am needed for a conference with Kitchener."

Then he put a half-crown in his eye, and turned to the officer. "Come along, old top," he said, "let's go see the commander-in-chief."

We were marched down to the local jail, and brought before a bristling provost marshal, whose huge mustache stuck straight out on either side.

"What's the charge?" asked the Provost.

"Drunk and disorderly, and insulting an officer," said the subaltern, with great dignity.

Under the provost's bristles I could see a smile playing. He had handled men of the I. L. H. before, and evidently knew how far he'd get in trying to send any Colonel Briggs' men up for not saluting or any other petty offense. He beckoned the subaltern nearer him, and whispered in his ear.

"I don't care!" said the subaltern. "I insist that these men be arrested!"

"Very well." The provost seemed a little annoyed.

"What's your name and rank?" he asked Red.

"Major General Sir Charles Buddington Phelps," said Red, and the provost smiled and wrote it down.

"Yours?" he turned to Chic.

"Colonel Patrick O'Toole, *on the re-tired list*," said Chic, emphasizing the last part of his answer.

I took my cue from Chic, and as soon as the Provost stopped writing said: "General Joe Mackenzie, *also on the retired list*."

. . "That re-tired list goes for all of us," said Red.

"All right, sergeant, show these officers to their quarters," said the provost, entering into the spirit of the thing.

As the sergeant marched us to a cell I heard him say to the subaltern: "See what you are doing? Those men will demand their discharge, and Briggs will raise hell!"

"This is a——" The rest of the subaltern's reply was lost by the shutting of a door behind us.

We stretched out on the floor of the cell and waited developments. I don't know how long we waited, for

we all fell asleep, and were wakened by one of our own sergeants and a couple of our pals, who said they had been sent to get us. So we left the jail, and all went to a pub for a drink.

The next day my friend the Cockney sergeant-major told me that the adjutant had received a message from the provost which read something like this:

"I have under my charge two generals and a colonel of your regiment; all claim to be on the retired list. They are charged with being drunk and disorderly, and insulting an officer. Please send instructions."

That was all there was to it. We marched in a couple of days and never heard any more about it, though I saw the Colonel and his staff laughing among themselves when Red and I reported for scouting duty.

It was shortly after this that Red came in from a lone scouting expedition and reported that a number of Boers had taken up headquarters at a farm several miles from camp. As soon as dark came two squadrons of the regiment marched under Red's guidance to surround this house, which was situated at the bottom of a small pass running between low lying hills.

It was a bright starlit night, the starlight such as is only found in tropic countries, clear and brilliant. The moon was in its last quarter and wouldn't rise

until toward morning. But the moon wasn't needed; we had light enough to move about conveniently, yet darkness enough to cover our movements—an ideal night for secret movements. The squadrons marched out across the veldt in a close, silent column. Two hundred ghost-like riders wound in and out of the hollows. We avoided the open country, and kept down off the ridges. Perhaps it was seven or maybe eight miles to the house where the Boers were; but we rode fifteen miles or more to get there.

Several hundred yards from the house we halted, and the Number Threes of each squad took over the horses. I was standing beside Red, waiting for orders, and along came my troop sergeant.

"Here, Witten," he ordered in a hoarse whisper, "hold mine and the officers' horses."

My heart sank as I took the rein he held out to me; then I heard my squadron commander in the dark.

"Sergeant Bryce!" The commander's voice showed irritation. "Witten is too valuable a man to hold horses at such a time as this."

I believe that was the proudest moment of my life. I was then sixteen, and had been declared valuable by the leader of two hundred of the world's finest fighting men, who were gathered in the dark and were about to launch into an exploit in which blood would be shed, and probably lives lost. At that moment I would have gone through any kind of a hell to justify the commander's words; and before the

night was out, to some extent, I did justify what he had said.

"I'm sorry, sir," said the sergeant, taking his horse from me, and handing it to another man.

"Summers," the Commander whispered to Red, "you take Witten and a dozen other men, circle around the house, and take up a position to cut off their retreat through the pass. We will rush the front of the house in half an hour. Keep well down in the pass, so that you won't come under our fire. Stay in position until you get orders."

Red took the twelve men nearest to him, told them to keep in touch with me, and led off to the right of the farm.

We walked for about five hundred yards through hollows and dongas. From then on we had to crawl. We bellied over a stretch of open ground, then entered an orchard that ran up the side of a hill. Red was moving with a swift, noiseless, cat-like movement, which he had tried to teach to me, but which I could never perfect as well as he did. However, I kept right behind, and when we left the orchard to skirt the hill and drop down into the pass I was close enough to touch him.

Red signaled a halt to me, and I turned to pass the signal along; but in the darkness I could make out no one behind me. I bellied back a few yards to make sure, but could still find no one. It was clear that Red and I were alone in the pass, and there wasn't time to go back and get the others. In a few

minutes the rush would be made, and the Boers would be riding through this pass.

I whispered what had happened to Red, and heard him swear softly. Unfortunately we did not know who the men were who should have been with us. Red had just taken those standing nearest. There were a number of new men in the regiment, and we judged that the man next to me was inexperienced, and had unwittingly lost touch with me, which, of course, would throw the whole party out.

There was a trail running up the pass, and we had rocks for cover.

"Take the other side of the trail," whispered Red, "I'll stay here, and we'll do our damnedest."

I crossed the trail and got in behind a small boulder. I knew from experience that if the retreating Boers rushed us, we would need something to stick our heads behind, to keep from having our brains knocked out with flying feet of horses.

Two years of war, and other things, had taught me to eliminate fear; yet as we lay there I trembled. I was filled with fear—not fear of death or bodily pain, but fear of failure. This was Red's expedition, and he had been entrusted to hold the key point of the fight. It was here that the Boers would try to escape, it was here they would make their stiffest fight. Failure here meant failure for the night's work, and failure for Red. The minutes dragged along interminably and eternally. I wondered if I wouldn't have time to go back and get the other men; so

crawled across to Red, and whispered to him that I'd try.

"Get back on the other side of the trail," he almost snarled at me, "we've got to hold this pass alone!"

I didn't blame Red for being sore. There was murder in my own heart, and the responsibility wasn't mine; though, perhaps I should have kept looking back, and made sure that the others were keeping in touch. This thought made me utterly miserable; but I clutched my cocked rifle, and pulled my pistol from its holster and waited.

A rooster crowed in the barnyard, and my blood went cold. I have always hated roosters that crow at night since. The rooster's crowing disturbed other creatures. I heard a cow moo softly; then came the faint whinnying of a horse, and the grunt of a pig. My nerves were all a-tingle, and I was ready to shoot at a shadow.

Stillness, profound and terrible, followed the barnyard disturbances. Suddenly the mad barking of dogs split the night air; shouting of men, cracking of rifles and hissing of bullets, followed by the chaos of a midnight scrap. The Boers were putting up a fight to cover their retreat. In a moment they would be charging Red and me.

The first riders came out of the shadows of the farm a dozen abreast, firing as they rode. I raised my rifle and fired. All fear had gone now. I was seeing blood and had no thought but to stop the oncoming men. Red was pumping across the trail from me, and

I saw one man topple from his saddle at the crack of Red's rifle. I pumped as fast as I could. But two men could never hold back that charge of sixty. They rode right over us. Crouching under my boulder I lay half on my back and pumped with my pistol into the cloud of flying hoofs that thundered over us, and brought two horses down, and saw Red bring down three others.

When the scrimmage was over Red and I had one dead Boer and five live prisoners. Had the other twelve men stuck with us, our fire should have been heavy enough to have captured the whole outfit. Red had been badly stamped on by a horse, but said nothing about it until daylight came. I got nothing worse than a few clods of earth and flying stones. Our squadron commander commended us for our work, and two weeks later I appeared in orders as promoted to the rank of scout.

I have always believed, and so did many others, that if that scrap had been entirely successful, and we had captured all the Boers there, as we should have done, Red would have been commissioned.

They held a court of enquiry, and tried to find out who was to blame for the other men losing touch with me and Red; but they never could. There were too many new men, and no one had made a record of the names of those who were supposed to have been with us. Every one in both squadrons was questioned; but every one had an alibi. And of course the officers didn't want to make the mistake of punishing the

wrong men. Ten of the party acknowledged that they had been part of the detail; but each declared he had kept right behind the man in front of him, and only halted when his leading file halted. But two men of the detail could not be found, and it looked pretty certain that one or both of them were to blame.

This failure of the official enquiry to find the guilty ones didn't worry me much. Red had said nothing but I felt certain he was working quietly along his own lines, and would handle the situation in his own way.

Several weeks after this night attack we camped near a cluster of deserted houses. There were many of these small settlements scattered about the veldt. The next morning a man named Swinny was found hanging by his neck from a beam on the porch of one of these houses. He was an inferior sort of a cuss and had few friends in the regiment. He and a man named Wolf ran together. They were much of a sameness and had been with the regiment only a short time before the night attack. Swinny's death would have been regarded as suicide except for the fact that he had been gagged and his hands and feet had been tied and he had a severe knock on the head before he had been hung. Red and I had been on scouting duty that night and didn't return until late the next morning, and Red had a good report of his reconnaisance to make.

All that day Wolf, Swinny's only friend, moved about restlessly. He was questioned and cross ques-

tioned on Swinny's death; but clearly had no information to impart. But, when night was approaching, he went to the sergeant-major and asked for protection.

"What you scared of?" asked the S. M.

"They'll get me, same as they did Swinny!"

"Who'll get you?"

"Whoever killed Swinny."

"Why?"

"'Cause it was him and me that lost touch that night when they surrounded the farm."

"Oh, so that's it, hey?"

"It was Swinny who lost touch, and he threatened to kill me if I told."

"So you sneaked up on him, biffed him on the head, and killed him first?"

"No, sir, honest I didn't. I don't know who done it. But I'm sure they'll get me."

The sergeant-major put him under guard, and the next day he was tried by court-martial, and sentenced to five years at hard labor. And I reckon he was mighty glad to get off that easy.

No one ever knew who hung Swinny, and no one cared a damn.

CHAPTER 11

A Gentleman's Holiday

WE were riding hard on the tail of De Wet's commando, and trying to drive him into a trap. It was one of the many big drives that were organized by the British staff to surround and capture the most troublesome of the Boer leaders. Columns were closing in from all directions, and speed was the order of the day. Any delay of any column, especially our own, which was right on his tail, would have meant a gap in the line. Our wagons were doing a pretty good job of keeping up with us until we forded a drift of the Crocodile River; then one of the forward wagons broke down right in the middle of the drift, and blocked the rest of the convoy.

To get it out would have meant a long delay and we didn't dare delay; so the colonel gave orders that the wagons be burned, which was done and we continued forward. If we had left the wagons behind, the chances are they would have fallen into the hands of the Boers, and given them a lot of good supplies, which they were badly in need of.

That drive was one of the hardest of the war. We were in the saddle the best part of four days and

nights, and at the end of it had only a handful of prisoners, none of importance, to show. We were all sick and disgruntled. We had no blankets, and no cooking utensils. After a day of rest on the veldt we continued maneuvering, and hoping to find De Wet, who had smashed through the Blockhouse line, against which we had driven him, by stampeding several thousand head of cattle through the eight strand barbed-wire fence, and into a battalion of infantry. Then while the infantry were untangling themselves from the cattle De Wet got the bulk of his troops and convoy through, and was again out on the open veldt, and heading toward the Magaliesbergs.

We were a pretty tough bunch, and could get along without blankets; but we found the lack of cooking pots an inconvenience. After three days of this thing we came near a small town that had long since been evacuated and looted many times; still it had possibilities, and we were marched in and given a couple of hours in which to find what we could. Every store and house had been stripped of everything that could be carried away, except some enameled receptacles—flowers that were born to blush unseen, and generally are to be found hiding under beds in rural homes.

In one store we found several shelves of these modest receptacles. They stood in rows of various sizes, ranging from half quarts to half gallons. Here was a solution to our problem. They had never been used, and except for an accumulation of dust were as clean

as any other enamel pots found in stores. Red and I each selected two of different sizes, one large and one small. The rest of the regiment did the same, and we rode onto the veldt with a gay display of enamel ware dangling from our saddles.

Again we received word that De Wet was nearly surrounded, and we were needed to fill a place in the line. Off we galloped with our pots, and again a great cordon of many thousands of troops closed into a tight circle and found nothing. But at the end of this second disappointment the other regiments had a comedy to offset their gloom. Wherever we went they called unkind epithets after us; and finally pinned a name onto us that it took many months to live down. But we didn't care; though it annoyed our officers, and caused our colonel to hurry us to the line of communication, where we were properly re-equipped.

Our crowd had been in the regiment over four months without leave and was entitled to a holiday; so we put in for leave as soon as we reached the line, and went down to Durban. As we passed through Johannesburg Red and I went to our bank and drew out several hundred pounds from our joint account, leaving only a couple of pounds there to keep our account open.

As usual I began to wonder where we would land on this occasion. We had plenty of money, no matter how we got it, and for the present there would be no need of pulling any rough stuff to get funds;

but one never knew what was going on in Red's mind. I told him I wanted to have a gentleman's holiday with unstinted funds and nothing to worry about, except having a good time.

I reckon I might have had my gentleman's holiday if it hadn't been for a traveling theatrical troupe that was making a one week stand in Durban. They were playing the old pantomime, "The Sleeping Beauty," and Red and I, with the others from the I. L. H., took in the show the first night in town, which was their opening night. Our seats were in the front row of the stalls.

Red and the others soon began to make selections among the chorus, and planned to see what, if anything, was doing. I was still girl shy, and said nothing; but this didn't suit Red's plans, who maintained we couldn't have a gentleman's holiday unless we had the society of attractive women.

"No gentleman goes on a holiday unless he takes an actress or manicurist with him," said Red.

"Or maybe a secretary," chimed in Dal.

"Well, you fellows take what you want," I said, with a feeling of panic. "Don't you worry about me, I'll find something to do.'

"Now look here, Kid." Red was very serious. "You gotta snap out of it. It's time you began to assert your manhood. Your education's been sorta neglected; but we can't let this thing go on. You gotta pick out your girl, and play along with the crowd."

"Why not find a nurse for the kid?" asked Sonny.

"Yeah, that's it," said Chic, "we'll get him a nurse."

"You fellows go to hell," I said, feeling a bit peeved. "I'm particular about my girl friends."

"Well, you pick out the one you want, and the rest of us will lay off. Now come ahead, Kid, which one of the bunch do you want?" Red turned to me in his seat, and I felt that I had to do something.

"Come on, Kid, no four-flushing. You got first pick!"

"You can't back out on that; the rest of us will take second choice!"

"You can have my little redhead if you want her!"

The whole crowd were whispering earnestly to me, and I was cornered.

The witch had just stuck the Beauty with a needle, and she had gone into her hundred years sleep. She was dressed in a soft, flimsy sort of something, and stretched out on a downy couch, with her golden hair falling over her snow-white breast. She was a little darling of a girl, and looked as innocent as a child. Lying there she seemed wholly unapproachable, and to be had only for a king's ransom.

"There's only one in the show I'd have," I said, thinking I had hit on a clever way out.

"All right, point her out! Which is she?" they chorused.

"The Sleeping Beauty," I said, and leaned back in my chair with an air of having stumped them.

"Righto, Kid," said Red. "She's just about your mark."

The curtain went down in a few moments, and Red and Dal left the rest of us smoking in the lobby. Sonny and Chic were talking about the girls they had selected, and made some comments about the Sleeping Beauty; but I didn't pay any attention to them, and thought the whole thing was a dead issue, and that Red and Dal would get tin cans tied to them. But in a few minutes they came back, and were all smiles.

"It's fixed," said Red. "We meet 'em and go to supper after the show. And, Kid, you've picked out a pippin. That little Sleeping Beauty isn't much asleep off the stage. She's going to run you ragged!" The rest laughed, and the curtain call rang. I felt sick and wished I was back on the veldt, and all through the next act I felt like a man waiting for execution. But I couldn't figure any way out of it, except to bolt; and I was afraid that if I bolted from Red I'd lose his friendship. I'd have gone through hell any time to hold Red's regard.

The curtain went up with the Sleeping Beauty still lying on the couch, and everything was covered with cobwebs. She was supposed to have been asleep for a hundred years. I wished something would make her really stay asleep for the next hundred years. But the darling Prince Charming came along and killed all the dragons, and cut through the thick hedge, and smashed down a door and went in and

woke her up. I hoped the dragons would eat him, or he'd get choked in the hedge. That show seemed like the silliest thing I'd ever seen, and it kept going right along and being silly.

When the Sleeping Beauty woke up she kept coming over by the footlights and looking down at us, and Red and the others kept teasing me, and I felt like a damn fool. Then the chorus tripped in and four of the girls kept smiling down our way, and I thought every one in the theater was looking at us, and not at the show.

We met the girls after the show, and went with them in hacks to a restaurant. I became tongue-tied and didn't know what to say; I had no opposition with the Sleeping Beauty, and all she required was a good listener. That kid had a wonderful line of patter, and by the time we'd reached the restaurant she'd kissed me, and had me laughing. I think now that Red and Dal had tipped her off about me, and she knew she was up against a dumb-bell. But I'll give her credit for treating me decent. It was probably all just a lark with her—just trying out a sort of wild boy from the veldt; but she never showed it, and if any of the others, as they did, tried to rag me, she shut them up. Before the evening was over I was really beginning to be fond of her.

We took rooms in the same hotel where they were staying, and, well, I learned about women from the Sleeping Beauty. We stayed with them for a week, and spent money like remittance men, and at the

end of the week we were broke. But had no regrets. The Sleeping Beauty was a great little pal, and it nearly broke my heart when the time came for parting.

Every night that week I sent a large bouquet of flowers to the theater for the Sleeping Beauty, and they were passed up to her over the footlights after the second act. Red said that that was the right sort of thing to do. He and the others sent flowers to their girls, too, although we were with them all the time they were not on the stage. The day before they sailed (they were going back to England) I gave the Beauty an emerald brooch made in the letters I.L.H.; it cost me one hundred and fifty pounds; but she promised she'd always wear it, and gave me her address in England, and said she'd be looking for me after the war. I tried to find her in London about a year later, and learned that she was with a troupe in New Zealand. So I never saw her again. Perhaps it is just as well, for I have always carried pleasant memories of my first affair.

We still had over two weeks' leave to go, and we were broke. The prospect didn't look so good, and pointed to our getting into something that was not in the line of a gentleman's holiday.

"Let's go down and see the I.L.H. recruiting officer and ask him for an advance," I suggested to Red.

"We can try, but I doubt it."

Sonny, Dal and Chic said they were going up to

Maritzburg where they felt sure they could raise money. But Red and I elected to stay in Durban.

We tackled the recruiting officer, but found nothing doing.

"I'll give you five shillings for every recruit you bring in," he said.

Red was studying the officer close, and when we walked out he had him well sized up.

"That fellow wants to make us work," said Red. "He's having a hard time getting rookies."

The war had been on for two years now, and the first novelty had worn off. Most men in the colonies had had a go at soldiering and were satisfied. The irregular regiments were having difficulty in keeping up to full strength, so that five shillings a recruit did not promise a fortune to any one.

"Come on," said Red, stepping into a rickshaw. "We'll go down to the port and see if there's any mule boats coming in. We might grab off a couple o' dozen mule nurses there."

This was like Red. He was never a piker at anything. Here was a plan for wholesale recruiting, and promised good returns.

Down at the port we found a big tub that had just arrived from New Orleans. They were unloading both mules and horses, and Red and I got busy. Every one of those bums, who had tended the animals coming over, was keen to enlist; and when we offered to show them the ropes they thought we were doing them a favor. By four o'clock that afternoon

we had herded thirty-two of them together, and marched them up to the recruiting office in a body. They were good husky fellows, and all passed the doctor. This little transaction netted us eight pounds.

"We can't have a hell of a holiday on eight pounds," mused Red, handing me four gold sovereigns. "We gotta do better than that."

"Let's go back to the water-front," I said. "I've got a plan."

Red looked at me in wonder. As a rule he made most of the plans, and I just played along with him.

"There's no more mule boats due in for a week," he said.

"I know, but there's other ways. We may land in the hoosgow, but it's worth trying, if we can get the officer to play with us."

"What's your game, Kid?"

"Sailors."

Red's eyes sparkled. He liked anything that had a risk in it. Anything that was a game. And it pleased him to have me make the suggestion.

It was against the law to recruit sailors, but every recruiting officer who could get away with it was doing it. Sailors make good soldiers, and like excitement. Until the authorities put their foot down there were so many desertions of sailors who joined the army that ships lay idle in port for weeks waiting for crews. In some cases they had to bring crews from other ports. Recruiting sailors was like being

a fence and receiving stolen goods, which made you liable to arrest and imprisonment.

Red had sized up our man, and assured me he would play with us; so off we went to the waterfront as soon as we had had an early dinner. I have never heard Red spiel as he did that night. We went into the sailors' pubs and he fair laid it on. He talked about the glory of the service, the fat money to be made from loot, and the good times we had. He had those sailors goofy, and itching to go.

I stood off in the back away, and gave them a chance to speak to me alone. One by one they eased up to me, and asked me quietly if I could show them how to get into the service without being caught. I made it a personal favor with each one, and told him to meet me the following evening at a point near the railroad station, and advised them not to bring anything with them.

"You won't need anything," I told them. "In twenty-four hours you'll have a new outfit of everything you need."

This sounded good and I knew that most of them would come. When I had been approached by practically every man in a pub I would give Red a signal and we would beat it out to the next pub. We worked that night, and went from pub to pub until they closed. Both of us were well pickled. The sailors enjoyed Red's talking, and they all felt that I was doing them a great service; so they kept shoving the drinks our way.

The next day we went to see the recruiting officer and told him we had over sixty recruits, who would be on hand and ready to take train to Maritzburg that night. His smile told us he understood, though he pretended he didn't.

"You can't bring these men here to-day?" he asked.

"No, sir," answered Red. "There's a lot of them, and I promised them they'd be shipped up country tonight, otherwise they wouldn't come."

Well, the officer fell in with our plan. Though he assured us that the responsibility was ours. We agreed to this, and for the rest of the day enjoyed ourselves. But I found Durban a bit dull after the Sleeping Beauty had gone.

Eight o'clock that evening, the appointed hour, Red and I went to railroad yards, and there found over sixty sailors waiting. All of them looked a little anxious, and some of them were trying to kid their shipmates into believing that it was purely an accident that had brought them there. We soon set their minds at rest, though some of them were inclined to go back to their ships when they found that we were doing the thing on a wholesale plan. We knew that if any of them went back, they would be apt to talk, and then our whole plan would fall through. Again Red did some tall talking, and kept them interested until the officer arrived with a sergeant, who led the sailors to some third class carriages standing on a siding.

We saw them loaded up and watched the train put out for Maritzburg; then we collected another sixteen pounds from the recruiting officer. I thought we were going to have a fairly good time for the next few days, and was quite happy; but the next day we got a jolt.

It is a strange thing about being arrested: it generally happens when you are not expecting it, and think there is nothing stacked up against you. Red and I were watching a game of brag in the rear sitting room of our hotel—true, we had had a few drinks, but were far from being drunk. In walked three M.P.'s and a sergeant. We didn't pay any attention to them until they lined up two to each of us, and said we were wanted by the provost marshal.

"What for?" we asked.

"Don't know; but you better come along without any fuss."

As usual I looked at Red to get my cue, but he just turned and went with them. They marched us down to the provost's office, and kept us there without explanation for a couple of hours. Then the provost came in and told us we were wanted for overstaying leave.

We protested and tried to show him our leave papers; but he said he wasn't interested, and told us that if we didn't keep quiet, he'd prefer a charge against us for disorderly conduct. Then we were marched to the railroad station and put on a train for Maritzburg under an escort.

Here was a nice state of affairs. We had nearly twenty pounds in our pockets, and two weeks' leave, and were being held on a mistake. Red was keeping pretty quiet, which was a dangerous sign with him. If we'd been arrested for recruiting the sailors, or something else that we deserved arrest for, he'd have just laughed. But Red had a very keen sense of justice.

They held us in the hoosgow at Maritzburg until late the next day; then they brought us before the officer in command of the base, who apologized for our arrest. He said it was all a mistake, and offered to get our leave extended, if we wanted him to.

"You'd better keep away from Durban," he admonished. "You're liable to get into trouble there."

This puzzled me; but I saw a light of understanding come into Red's face, and he promised we'd spend the rest of leave in the capital. Later we learned that it was all a put-up job. The recruiting officer in Durban had learned that the civil police were after us for recruiting the sailors, and had had us arrested on a charge of over-staying our leave, and sent to the base to get us out of the way.

We joined the regiment at Krugersdorp, and there we saw our sixty-odd sailors trying to ride sixty-odd unbroken Argentine horses. It was better than a three-ring circus, but somehow they rode 'em. Sailors have a tenacious way of hanging on, and in a couple of weeks these fellows were riding the veldt, knee to knee with the old-timers.

CHAPTER 12

Zulu Hearts

THE Kaffir tribes, especially the Zulus, are a fighting people. They found it hard to keep out of this, the best war that Africa had seen. They would do almost anything to be with the troops, and often they showed great courage. In the Imperial Light Horse we formed small messes, ranging from two men to a dozen, though most of the messes had five or six, which was a convenient number. We had native boys to work for us. Nearly every man in the regiment had his own servant, though on occasion we shared one servant among two or three. This gave the natives a chance to have a hand in the war, and we never had trouble in getting boys.

Our Kaffirs used to travel with our baggage train. They gathered wood and water, made our fires, did the rough cooking, and helped take care of our horses. A few had donkeys that they had picked up on the veldt, but they were not allowed horses or mules.

Red and I were continually on the lookout for donkeys for our boys, because much can be carried on a donkey's back. One day we were coming in from a

reconnaisance with several others and ran onto a herd of about four hundred. We each caught one, and led them into camp, and gave them to our servants. Some one told about the drove, and immediately there was a rush. Within an hour every donkey had been captured, and tethered in some part of the camp. All our servants were delighted, and we were happy, because it meant better fare for us.

We were making one of our secret marches, and had camped in among some hills, so as to keep the Boers from knowing of our movements. Everything went fine during the early part of the evening. Our servants knew how to forage grain for their mounts, and every one was happy. We had orders to march at two in the morning; so we turned in early.

Shortly after dark a donkey brayed, and in a moment he was answered by another on the other side of camp; then a third took it up; and a fourth, and finally there was a continuous braying of jackasses. They made the night hideous with their mournful notes, and could be heard for miles around.

No one got any sleep that night, and when we rose at twelve-thirty to prepare for the march we were all in a bad humor. The Kaffirs were trying to keep their mounts quiet, and some had tied heavy rocks to their donkey's tails, which is a sure preventive against braying by a mule or donkey, and nickering by a horse.

As soon as we got started on the march the donkeys quieted down. So we decided that all would be

well, and that their braying was simply the result of not being accustomed to being tethered.

Red and I were scouting in the advance, and keeping mighty quiet, when suddenly a jackass brayed and the whole chorus started up again. The night was split wide open with their noise. Any poor dumb wit could have told the line of our march by the sound of the braying. It was like going out on a night maneuver into the enemy's country with a brass band playing. Knowing the Boers we felt sure that it would spell trouble, if there were any great numbers within several miles of us. Trouble we had in handfuls.

I was riding a vicious brute of a horse that was quick on the trigger with its front feet and teeth. As we rode down into a valley and approached low bush we heard movement in front of us.

"Keep moving slowly ahead," whispered Red. "I'll warn the advance and come back."

He left me alone, and I drew my pistol half out of its holster. I didn't dare to stop; because, if a trap lay ahead, it was my job to find it first, so that the main body could be ready for trouble, and not fall into it. Every moment I was drawing nearer to the bush, and behind me came the column with its braying jackasses.

"Oop haands!" I suddenly heard yelled at me from either side, and two men grabbed my horse's bridle.

The brute reared, lashed out with his front feet,

and dived with bared teeth at the man on the left. At the same moment I let drive with my Webley at the man on the right. Both went to the ground, as my shot started the ball. The bush suddenly became alive with flashing rifles. Behind me I heard orders for Number Threes to hold horses, and the next minute I was in between two lines of fire. Then I drove spurs into my horse, and bolted for the flank.

That horse was one of the meanest brutes I ever rode, but he saved the regiment that night; for the Boers had planned to capture the advance scouts without firing a shot, and then let the main body of the column walk into a well-laid trap. Seven years after this I met one of the Boers who had tried to take me prisoner that night, and he showed me two scars from my horse's hoofs. This man lives in Brooklyn, and for over twenty years we have been good friends.

That was the end of our jackasses. That day the colonel issued orders that no donkeys were to be permitted in the regiment, and they were all turned loose.

Often we were ordered on what was known as a "forced march." This meant hard riding, and long hours in the saddle. We rode, on these occasions, with stripped saddles, leaving our baggage wagons and all that might rattle behind. Then we would part with our servants, and often we would never see them again. This had recently happened, and we had

been without servants for a couple of weeks. Then we came to a locality where a missionary had held forth some twenty-odd years before. His teachings had long since been forgotten, if they had ever been understood. But he had left his mark; for we found most of these coal black Zulus had Bible names. Men and women alike answered to the names of saints.

As usual the young men were anxious to join us, and we took on a new supply of servants. I drew Saint Peter, and he turned out to be the finest servant I had during the war. He was still a youngster, shorter and heavier set than most Zulus, but keenly intelligent and always ready to work. We soon abbreviated his name to Pete, and after I had employed Pete I seldom went hungry. Red said that the missionary had taught Pete the secret of the five loaves and seven fishes, or whatever it was that fed the thousands. His supplies of food seemed to be inexhaustible, and we wondered how he did it. Then one day we learned.

Several of the fellows came to me and told me they had set a trap for whoever had been stealing their supplies, and that they had pinned it on Pete. I asked Pete about this, and he readily admitted it was true, then added that he thought it was all right to steal, just so he didn't steal from me.

I explained the ethics of army life to him, and he promised not to steal within the regiment again. I didn't care how much he stole outside.

From that time on our supplies were not so plen-

tiful; though we still fared well, even when the regiment was on short rations; for Pete was a great forager. One evening Red and I rode in from a hard day and were told that our supply convoy had not come in, and it was thought that the Boers had captured it. Every one was prepared to turn in hungry; so Red and I took in our belts, lit our pipes, and tried to think of something else besides food.

"Dinner's ready, Baas," said Pete in a low voice, and leaning down close to us, as if he didn't want to noise the fact around too much.

"Bring it on!" I almost shouted.

Then he handed us each a dish of roast suckling pig, and stewed peaches.

"There weren't nothing else on that farm, but pigs and peaches," apologized Pete.

We assured him that he had done wonderfully well, and he had, for I believe we were the only ones in camp who fed that night. But pig and green peaches are a great combination when the walls of your stomach are flapping together.

Some time after this we were disturbed one night by desultory fire from one of the outposts. But things quieted down and we went to sleep.

In the morning I missed my cup of coffee, and wondered what had become of Pete. The fire was dead, and near its gray ashes were Pete's blankets, spread out on the ground as if he had just crawled out of them. This was strange, and set me wondering. I was still wondering after I had cooked our

breakfast, and continued to speculate with Red on the matter, when we received a summons to report to headquarters.

We were in standing camp, and Red and I had expected a rest, so were a bit put out when we thought we had to go on reconnaissance.

"You're not wanted mounted," said the orderly. "They got your Kaffir a prisoner over there, and he's been shot."

Red and I took it on the double.

We found Pete surrounded by several officers, who were asking him questions. It seems he'd been out foraging the night before, and had slipped through our picket lines and gone to a Boer farm for loot. Coming back with a load of provisions he had been chased by a party of Boers, and in running from them had blundered into and been shot by our pickets.

"What made you go so far from camp?" asked the Adjutant.

"My baas needed food," was the laconic reply.

"You say there were Boers at this house you looted. How many were there?"

"About forty."

"How do you know?"

"I climbed up on the porch and looked through a crack in a window."

"Didn't they have pickets out?"

"Yes, but they didn't see me. I'm black." He grinned, and we all laughed.

"Could you guide us there tonight?"

"Yeah, Baas!" Pete was all excitement.

That night we put Pete on a horse—he had two superficial wounds—and he led my squadron to the house he had looted the night before. He showed us where the Boer pickets were crouching behind rocks, and guided us so that we crawled in behind them, and took them prisoners without shooting and giving an alarm. Then we rushed the house, and made a clean haul.

The night's work netted us forty-two prisoners, and Pete was aces high in the regiment. The colonel offered him a job as native guide; but Pete was loyal and said he wanted to stay with me.

"Well, you can continue to look after your baas," said the colonel, "and act as a guide for scouting parties."

So it was arranged, and Pete was given a horse, and when the regiment marched he either rode with headquarters or behind Red and me. He was the envy of every Kaffir in the column, and I got a lot of kick out of having him as a servant.

When the next forced march came, and servants had to be left behind, Pete proudly saddled his horse, and rode away with us.

This was one of the many occasions when De Wet turned the tables on us. We thought we were about to get him surrounded and captured, when suddenly we found ourselves under a beautiful cross-fire from four directions.

The main body, with a few wagons we had with us, took up a strong position on a rocky plateau, and were fairly well off. But my troop had been acting as rear guard, and the Boers had cut us off from the rest of the regiment. We took up an isolated position on a kopje; but had to let our horses fall into the hands of the enemy.

For five days and nights we held that kopje. Our position was good. We had plenty of ammunition, so long as we used it sparingly. Three days out of the five we had rain; so we dug holes in the ground and caught enough water to make out. But food was our big problem; for we had only one day's supply when we took up our position.

The Boers weren't bothering us much; they seemed pretty confident that we would hoist a white flag in time, and they were saving their own ammunition to use against the main body. Over there we could hear a constant rattle of rifle and gun fire; but could tell nothing about what was happening. Several men, including Red, tried to get through and bring us help. But the Boers had us well guarded, and every attempt failed, one man getting killed.

On the evening of the fourth day we were nearly frantic with hunger, and men were making all sorts of wild suggestions to relieve the situation.

Darkness had fallen an hour or more, when suddenly, at the foot of the kopje, we heard a fusillade of shots. We grabbed our rifles, and prepared to meet a rush; but the silence and stillness that fol-

lowed was stifling. Lying there in the blackness I longed for something to happen, and hoped the Boers would rush us, and get the thing over with. Anything, even death, seemed better than this eternal waiting and starving. I have gone for much longer periods without food while on the march, or when actually fighting, and suffered less than I did on that kopje, with nothing to do but think and wait.

"Baas! Oh, Baas!" the voice came out of the darkness before us, and I thought I was going goofy.

"Baas! Oh, Baas!" it came again. "Don't shoot! Here's Pete coming!"

"Come on!" I shouted, and in another moment he was beside me, and had dropped a gunny sack filled with canned beef and hard-tack on the ground.

"I brought you food, Baas." Then he was quiet.

Here was food! Something to stop the terrible gnawing at our guts! We handed out the hard-tack, and tore into the cans of beef. We ate and gorged like hogs, and when I had had my fill I thought again of Pete, and thought that I ought to say something to him to show my appreciation of what he had done.

"That was fine work, Pete!" I said. "How did you get through?"

Silence greeted my belated attempt to show gratitude.

"Pete, Pete!" I called, but no answer.

Then I crawled on my hands and knees and felt

for him in the dark. Soon my hand touched his warm body, and again I called him, and shook him. The truth dawned on me, and I felt along the vital parts of his body, and my hand was wet with clotting blood.

Pete, a black boy, with a heart of gold, had given his life for me and the squadron. His job had been to see that we were fed, and he carried it out no matter what the obstacles.

When the relief came, and we were able to stand erect, and take care of our dead, we buried Pete in the same long grave with a dozen of our troop who had died on the kopje.

It was some time before Red and I could find another servant; then one day a great gangling Kaffir came to our fire and offered to work for us. He was a dirty, ragged, slovenly-looking creature, and his lower lip hung down in a way that gave the impression that he was a half-wit.

"He'll do to carry wood and water," said Red. "We'd better take him until we can get something better."

We took him and regretted it nearly every day. He was the most damn-fool nigger I have ever had the misfortune to have around me. Yet he had his qualities. Wood and water was a problem with us; but Daguan, our new servant, always kept us well supplied. Beyond that he was worse than useless. Yet he seemed to be trying terribly hard to please, and in spite of his dumbness was likeable.

Every time we broke camp and marched Daguan would go around the fires and gather up all the wood left behind, tie it into a huge bundle, and swing it on top of his head. Then holding it with one hand he would carry a big water bucket in the other. The bucket, of course, would be empty; but he always filled it toward the end of the march, and would have a fire built and water boiling while the other Kaffirs were still looking for fuel.

He became known in the regiment as "Dummy Daguan," or some called him: "Kid's Dummy." Invariably when the regiment marched the rear guard would leave him behind picking up wood; but before the day was out he would have caught up with the wagons.

Around the fire he was a nuisance. Just as the coffee had boiled he would manage to knock it over; then apologize profusely, and make a big show of adjusting matters. If we managed to get hold of butter, or some other unusual delicacy, he would invariably step in it.

Repeatedly we kicked him from the fire, and told him to get to hell away from us. On these occasions he would hang around like a licked mongrel, and the next night he would be there with his wood and water. So for several weeks we kept him, but intended to give him the air as soon as we could get a better servant.

Then one morning he was missing, and we hoped we had seen the last of him. We had ridden into

Potchestroom the night before; so knew we would have no trouble in getting another servant.

Late that morning I received a summons to appear before a summary courtmartial, and wondered what it was all about.

When I arrived where the courtmartial was being held I was surprised to find that Dummy Daguan was the prisoner. Yet he was a changed Daguan, and no longer worthy of the name of Dummy. He had thrown off his ragged clothes, and now sat on an empty biscuit box, very erect, in native costume. His lower lip no longer sagged, and his eyes snapped with a defiant fire. One brown leg was swathed in bandages, and his left arm was in a sling.

"Do you know the prisoner?" asked the president of the court."

"Why—er—yes, sir, he looks like my servant," I stammered, and I saw a slight smile play about the firm set lips of Daguan.

"Last night he was shot while trying to pass through the lines with messages to the enemy."

The court was watching me keenly, and I realized that I was in a tight place. But my past record, and the utter surprise that I must have shown, evidently satisfied them that I was not knowingly a party to this espionage.

"There is no doubt but that he is the runner for a spy in the regiment," continued the president. "All our movements for several weeks have been well known to the enemy. We all know of his habit

of lingering behind to gather wood when we marched from one position to another. We believe that this was only a ruse to allow him to meet up with the enemy and deliver his messages. He has admitted that this is true. But he won't tell us who gives him these messages to the enemy."

I could throw no light on the matter, neither could Red, and after lengthy questioning we were released. But remained to see the outcome of this strange affair.

They offered Daguan his freedom, provided he would tell the name of the man he really served. But he only shut his lips tighter. For hours they threatened and cajoled him; finally in almost perfect English he burst into a torrent of abuse, and told them that he was the son of a Zulu Chief and that he would rather die than be guilty of betraying the one he served. Then he defied them to do their worst.

His sentence was read, and he was given until sunset to prepare himself to die; or to change his mind, and save his own life by selling that of the man he served.

That was a long and miserable day for me. Every moment I waited and hoped for news that Daguan had broken down and squealed; yet, somehow I hoped he wouldn't. If he had, he would have lost caste, and I would have lost all sympathy and respect for him. Though he had been in sympathy with the enemy, and had been doing much to help them outwit us, I couldn't help admiring him. I

envied him his fortitude and courage, and wondered what I would have done under similar circumstances, with death only a short hour away.

To think that I had beaten and cursed such a man. There are two African natives whom one who knows African codes never strikes; one is a Swahili warrior and the other the son of a Zulu Chief. Yet Daguan had accepted these indignities, and had been content to play the part of a fool and a drudge in order that he might carry out the service he believed in.

When the time came for him to face the firing squad he remained firm.

Red and I were standing to one side, and Daguan kept his eyes on us.

"Have you anything to say before you die?" asked the officer in charge of the execution squad.

"I would like to say good-by to Baas Summers and Baas Witten," said Daguan, and in his eyes there was a yearning look of hope.

In those last moments of his life he seemed to long for a friend. I wondered if the man he served was standing near, and how he felt.

"Do you want to speak to the prisoner?" asked the officer.

"Thank you, sir," said Red.

Then we both stepped forward.

"I'm sorry for the trouble I've caused you, and hope you'll understand," said Daguan.

"We do," I said, and held out my hand to him.

"Good-by, Daguan." I was choking and could say no more.

He took my hand and held it lingeringly, but I never heard what he said. The next thing I knew I was back of the line, and eight rifles spat flame and death into the evening calm.

He was black, and he was an enemy; but by the eternal gods he was a man.

CHAPTER 13

Red "Hops the Limited"

IN late November, 1901, we were in camp just outside Harrismith, and next us were camped some yeomanry with a section of the Honorable Artillery attached. They were fine chaps, these men of the Honorable Artillery, all of them were officer material, and when you met them you knew you had met men. Red and I had a number of friends in this outfit, and while we camped beside them often went to their tents and spent a pleasant evening gambling. They gambled like gentlemen, which Red said was a treat.

In the midst of a downpour of rain we, that is the I.L.H., got orders to march at once. It was one of those occasions when we suddenly dropped every comfort and prepared for real work. At two o'clock in the morning we stood shivering in wet clothes ready to march, and were holding our horses with heads bent and shoulders hunched against the gusts of water that splashed down from Table Mountain and chilled us to the bone. It was summer time, but no matter how warm the African days, most African nights are cool.

Suddenly out of the darkness I heard some one calling Red and me in a low voice. We answered, and two tall figures stepped up beside us.

"Here, give us your horses," whispered one, "and go to our tent, we have a cup of hot coffee for you."

They were two of the Honorable Artillerymen. The thought of hot coffee sounded good; but we feared that orders to mount and ride might come while we were gone, and Red was always nuts on doing his duty as a soldier.

"Don't worry," they assured us, "we'll let you know as soon as the first order comes. Now run along."

The tent was nearby and, though they had the light well shielded with blankets, we had no difficulty in finding it in the dark. The gang were waiting for us with hot coffee, hot roast beef sandwiches and plenty of rum.

We stuffed a hasty feed while they chatted to us, and filled our canteens with hot rum and coffee, and our haversacks with sandwiches. Then we lit our pipes, and had a couple of glorious puffs before one of the fellows who had been holding our horses ran in and told us they were mounting.

We said a hurried good-by, and promised to look them up in England, if we didn't meet again on the veldt. We did meet again; but it wasn't in England and the boys of the Honorable Artillery company never knew. Perhaps all this sounds like a trivial thing to mention; but often it is the little things in

a big show that leave lasting impressions. To-day I can close my eyes and see every one of those fine fellows as I saw them by candle-light that night in a crowded tent, and as I saw them again on Christmas morning on the veldt.

On Christmas Eve we went into camp about thirty miles from Harrismith, near a blockhouse line that was nearing completion. From an escort convoy going into Harrismith we learned that our friends were camped with the yeomanry about fourteen miles further along the line. That night when we turned in Red and I lay in our blankets discussing plans for some sort of possible celebration the next day. We felt reasonably sure that we would have nothing to do that was not absolutely necessary; for there are certain days of the year, like Christmas, that Britishers always recognize, even in the midst of a war.

"If we could get with the lads of the Honorable Artillery," said Red, "I'll bet we'd have some fun."

"But I don't see how we can, unless we can fake up some kind of a scouting expedition in their direction," I said.

"That's an idea."

Red was silent for a few minutes.

"Can't you think of anything you've seen out that way that needs further investigation? Maybe we could find a pass in the Drakensbergs that leads to De Wet's headquarters," I suggested.

"Yep!" Red sat up. "I remember now seeing a

number of Boer pony tracks leading off into the mountains from that neighborhood. We ought to report it to the adjutant, and go out there and investigate. It might lead to ending the war!"

The thought of spending Christmas with the Honorable Artillerymen filled me with happy anticipation, and I felt sure that by morning Red would have a plausible story concocted that would warrant our riding out to hunt for De Wet's headquarters. With these thoughts I fell asleep, to be wakened a little before five in the morning by hurried orders to saddle up, mount and ride like hell.

A wounded yeomanryman had galloped into our camp and brought the news that De Wet had surprised his regiment, killed most of them, and was making away with their supplies.

I remember that the night before I had disobeyed orders, and had undressed before turning in. We were always supposed to sleep fully dressed and armed, ready to get out at a moment's notice. So this Christmas morning I managed to get on a pair of pants, but in the rush rode off without coat or shirt, having thrown my bandoliers on over my undershirt.

For fourteen miles we rode as hard as horses could gallop, and reached the burning camp in time to see the last of De Wet's men riding off toward the mountains.

We found a sorry mess. Out of some five hundred men nearly two hundred had been killed. Most of

the remainder had been wounded, and the unwounded had been taken away prisoners. The Boers had cleaned out the camp, and what they couldn't carry they had burned. Here and there among the dead yeomanry we found dead Boers. But when we came to the quarters of the Honorable Artillery company we found a terrible slaughter.

What a fight those artillerymen must have made! They had easily accounted for two to one before they had all been killed. Not a man of the section was left alive.

Red and I stood and looked at our friends lying there under the scorching African sun. But they were beyond our help; so we left them there to attend to the wounded living.

We spent all that Christmas Day working on empty stomachs, caring for the wounded, burying the dead, and destroying hundreds of wounded horses and mules. I shot wounded horses and mules that day until my wrist pained like a knife-thrust every time I pulled the trigger of my Webley. Late that night our wagons and Kaffirs joined us with our kits and provisions; but we were all too tired to bother about eating. We just grabbed our blankets and rolled up in them and went to sleep.

Shortly after this we went on a long series of marches, which finally landed us up in the northern Transvaal. There was little fighting, and our days were rather dreary. No one seemed to know where we were going or what we were going to do when we

got there. We just marched and marched, and then marched some more. Red and I scouted day after day, but seldom saw anything to report. It was really the begining of the end. Many of the Boers had come in and given up; but some of the bitter-enders were still making trouble in spots.

The British had control of all the railroads, and were running trains with fairly regular schedules. But the bitter-enders would swoop down on the railroads and wreck trains, and carry off supplies whenever they could find an unguarded section of tracks. Finally we came to a halt north of Pretoria, and settled down to the dreary work of riding patrol along the railroads.

Red and I were riding over a six-mile stretch. It was a clear starlit night, and fairly warm for an African night. We rode in silence, as we always did on these occasions, though we had little expectation of seeing any Boers. Each of us was wrapt in his own thoughts. . . . I was thinking of what a funny thing life was. Here were Red and I, two American hoboes, whom society classed as outlaws, and the railroads regarded as their special enemies, riding patrol for the protection of the railroads. The thought amused me, and I smiled to myself in the darkness.

Then my thoughts wandered on to other railroads. Roads all over America where Red and I had "held 'em down." I had a hunch that the war would soon be over, and wondered what Red and I would

do. We had a good substantial balance in our joint account in the bank in Jo-burg, and first we would have to blow that in. After that? Would we again ride the Limiteds, follow the birds north and south? I wondered if Red intended ever to be anything other than a wanderer. For my part I had no other ambition.

In the midst of these thoughts I suddenly became aware of Red grabbing my bridle and pulling my horse up short.

"Quick, Kid! Down on your gut!" he warned, and threw one leg across his horse.

But it was too late. A dozen rifles flashed a few yards on our left front. I felt the jab of a bullet in my thigh, and my horse crumpled under me. Red pitched forward like a diver from a spring-board, and lay still on the ground, while his horse limped away at a ragged trot.

I flopped on the ground beside Red and saw his pistol gleam in his outstretched hand. Then the necessity of action came. I drew my own gun, and grabbing Red's from his limp fingers, I fired both rapidly in the direction of the rifle flashes. The results were what my muddled mind had hoped for. In the darkness the Boers took my rapid fire for the fire of several, and made for cover, and as long as I could hear the thud of their horses' feet I kept shooting, using my own dead horse as a breastwork.

When the Boers had gone, and stillness again enveloped the night, I eased over nearer Red.

"Red!" I called, and my hand trembled with fear as I touched his shoulder. "Red, old man, talk to me!"

"All — right — Kid. I'll — be — all — right," he panted in jerks.

"Where'd they get you, Red?"

"In the guts," his voice was so low I could hardly hear.

"Then lie quiet, and don't try to talk."

It was the only chance for a man hit in the guts, and a slim chance it was. But doctors had always told us that if we were ever hit in the stomach, to lie quiet, and give nature a chance to heal the wounds.

I lifted Red's head, and in the agony of fear of losing him I forgot my own wound, which was superficial. For a long while he lay still and silent. Then:

"Kid," in a faint whisper.

"Yes, Red," I leaned over.

"Help me turn, my guts are burning."

I turned him half on his side, and maneuvered him until he said he was fairly comfortable. Then again he lay silent.

From time to time I felt tremors of pain shooting through his body, and I knew he was stifling his groans, which was bad, and was using up his strength.

"Don't hold back, Red," I whispered. "You don't have to show me that you can stand the gaff. You're wasting your strength, I can feel you straining to hold back your groans."

His hand crept up and caught mine, and he turned his eyes on me in the starlight.

"Give me a drink, Kid?"

"Good God, no, Red! It would be murder!"

"I'm burning up, Kid," he pleaded.

Then I wet my handkerchief from my water bottle, and put it to his lips. This is what I had always heard was the right thing. Never give a man wounded in the stomach anything to eat or drink, because it makes the stomach work, and tears things up.

I kept wetting his lips and forehead. The night had grown chill, yet his hands were hot, and I knew he was in a fever.

Perhaps it was less than an hour, perhaps it was several hours, or maybe it was an eternity that I sat there on the veldt with Red dying in my arms. And God, the thoughts I had! I lived again all we had been through together; and shuddered with dread when I thought of the future without him. For a world without Red would be a dead world to me.

Red's horse had limped away, and I hoped he had gone right on to camp; for then they would know we were in trouble and send out help, and maybe the doctor would come. I had heard that if a doctor could get to a man wounded like Red within an hour or so, he could save him. I wanted to pray for help, but I didn't know how. As a child I had been taught to pray on my knees; but I couldn't get on my knees without disturbing Red. Anyhow,

I didn't know what to say, or how to begin; so I just sat there.

The stars began to grow dim, and a gray mist swept over us; then it lifted and I saw the sun coming up like a sea of flame.

Red stirred.

"Lie still, Red," I begged.

"It's no use, Kid," he said. "I've got to hop the Limited for a long run. Give me a drink, Kid, before I go. I'm all on fire!"

My heart seemed to be breaking, and I sat there gazing down at him in dumb terror.

"Hurry, Kid," he begged. "The Limited's coming through, and I've got to go!"

Then I held the bottle to his lips; but I couldn't speak. I was choking.

He drank in great gulps till the bottle was empty. Then he looked at me and smiled.

"That's better, Kid."

He seemed to revive, and for a moment I thought he would pull through.

"A drink of rum, Kid, to brace me for the big jump."

I pulled out my flask and stuck it to his lips, and he took several swallows. Then he lay back and smiled. It was his old reckless smile, the smile that had always made me feel confident that we'd pull through any difficulty.

"You feel better, Red?" I asked hopefully.

"Yes, Kid. But the Limited's coming. I can hear

her pulling out of the yards. Before I go I want to tell you——"

He was silent for a few moments, and seemed to be shaping his words. Then:

"It's all wrong, Kid. This—you and I. You're young, and you've got a chance. When I was a kid I—I——"

His voice drifted off into a sort of mist, and I leaned closer.

"Yes, Red," I encouraged him.

"Kid, I——"

But I couldn't hear what he was trying to say. I strained to listen, and put my ear against his parched lips. But couldn't catch a sound. Then I looked into his eyes, and saw a sort of pleading there, as he stared back at me.

I held the rum flask to his lips again, and he managed a small swallow.

"Good-by, Kid, I'll meet you——"

His eyes turned from me, and fixed on the rising sun, and his lips set in a death-defying smile.

I listened for his breathing. But Red, the best pal I ever had, had hopped the Limited and passed into the limbo, taking his secret with him.

Across the veldt a haw-de-daw rose in its perpendicular flight and gave a warning cry of danger. A herd of blesbok loped over the brown grass. Then a group of ragged bushes suddenly leaped into life and took form, and I saw the advance riders of my squadron galloping toward me.

CHAPTER 14

The Black Terror

THEY buried Red on the veldt, and put a wooden cross over him marked: "John Harrington Summers, Scout, 1st I.L.H." I never saw his grave; but some of the fellows told me about it. My wound wasn't bad, but they sent me to hospital, and I was taken to Newcastle.

We were in wall tents, and through the heat of the day they would take the walls down to let whatever air was stirring pass through. Lying there I could look into the next tent, which was called the "loony tent", because it was used as an observation tent for fellows who had become queer. Some had had sunstroke, and others had just gone dippy from fright. There was a sergeant there who had sleeping sickness, and was in a kind of stupor most of the time. In the bed just across from me was a big, handsome fellow, who seemed to have nothing the matter with him, except that he would never talk. If people came and spoke to him, he understood them and would smile or write an answer on a pad he kept near him. All day he made bead belts and hand-bags. He had made belts for all the doctors, and bags for all the nurses.

"Who's that fellow over there?" I asked my nurse one day.

"The man with the bead belt?"

"Yes."

"That's Shelton," she lowered her voice. "He's dumb from fright."

"What scared him?" I asked.

"The Black Terror of Death Pass!" she whispered.

"Death Pass!" I blurted out, sitting bolt upright in bed. All the horror of Jonesy's death came rushing back at me.

At the mention of Death Pass Shelton sprang to his feet, and stood there trembling and wild-eyed, glaring about, as if he expected the Black Terror to leap at him.

"Hush!" The nurse pushed me gently back upon the pillow. I was trembling, for my nerves were still a bit unstrung from the night of Red's death.

"Tell me!" I asked. "What does he say about the Black Terror?"

"Nothing!" she replied. "He's been dumb ever since that night. Any attempt to question him, any mention of the Black Terror of Death Pass, makes him insane and unmanageable. They say he is the only man who ever met the Black Terror and lived. When they brought him here both his arms were broken, and he had been stabbed in five places about the shoulders."

Shelton had become unmanageable. My thought-

less shout of "Death Pass!" had completely deranged him. It took two nurses and three orderlies to hold him down while the doctor gave him a sedative. The next day he was calm again, and sewed quietly and steadily on his bead belt.

I used to lie and watch him through the long hot days. Wondering what the Black Terror could be —a monster so terrible it could completely destroy the nerves and reason of such a fine specimen of manhood——.

A few weeks later I was back in the saddle, though still a little shaky. Again we were chasing De Wet. It was good to be in action; though with Red gone, and many other changes, I felt terribly lonesome. I took to reading, and kept very much to myself.

The war had swung off to the South again. De Wet was making raids down into Natal, and we found ourselves back in the old stamping grounds of the early days.

Things were fairly quiet and the game had become less strenuous. I had got hold of a pup-tent, and by shading it with blankets could lie in there at night and read. One night I was deep in the gruesome pages of Rider Haggard's novel "She", the plot of which was laid along the Tugela Valley. It was near midnight and I was reading about the custom of the natives of putting red-hot pots over the heads of strangers who came into the Valley and roasting them alive, then having a grand feast.

There was a rattle on the flap of my tent, and

my friend the Cockney sergeant-major stuck his head in.

"Come on, lad, get your 'orse saddled. The colonel wants you to take despatches."

I rolled out, and in a few minutes was standing outside headquarters, ready for a ride into the night.

When I got my despatches I got a shock; for eighteen miles of my ride would be through the Tugela Valley. I had been there before and knew the country well; but I hadn't read Rider Haggard's "She" before. Now the reaction of his book, and the thought of going into the location of its plot alone in the middle of the night, made little creepy chills run up and down my spine. But there was nothing I could do, except go. If I had tried to get out of it, I would have lost my standing in the regiment, and my rank as a scout.

Trying to shake off the effects of the book I rode out into the veldt. In those first few miles I almost prayed for a friendly Boer to come and put a bullet through my leg or shoulder, just any place that wouldn't do too much damage, but would give me a good excuse to turn back. But I saw nothing, and I knew that the further south I went the less chance there would be of my meeting any Boers.

When I reached the Valley and began to descend into its blackness sheer terror filled my heart. Yes, I was yellow. But I have talked of this since to other men, and they have confessed to me that Haggard's stories have made them yellow too, when they have

suddenly found themselves alone at night in the location of one of his plots.

All night I rode with my rifle across the pummel of my saddle, cocked and ready to shoot at a noise. It is lucky that I didn't meet any painted Zulus that night; for I would have shot them for certain, and then got into a mess of trouble afterward. Fear is a funny thing; the horrors inspired by Haggard's book made the dangers of the war and the possible meeting of enemies seem like nothing. Yet common sense told me that the custom of hot-potting had long been done away with, and the other horrible things he described probably never existed; but it just goes to show that he is a darn good writer, and gives a fellow his money's worth in horrors.

The sun sure did look good to me as my horse climbed out of the Valley. When I handed in my despatches I was overjoyed to learn that there was no answer and that I could return to my regiment in my own time. Greytown was only twenty miles away, and there was a certain amount of fun to be had there; so I began to figure out an excuse for going there, and finally decided that my horse needed shoeing. Of course I could have had him shod at a number of other places. It was a lame excuse, but it was an excuse.

I rode into Greytown late that evening, and put up at the Mounted Police barracks. The last time I had stayed at the barracks was when I was on my way to desert and join another outfit. Of course I

met a number of old friends, and naturally a spree followed, so that the next morning I was pretty bleary-eyed.

I was standing by the farrier's shop, waiting for them to finish shoeing my horse, when an old man with a long white beard came up and stopped short in front of me. For a few moments he stood and stared as old men will.

"You look exactly like a man I knew years ago," he said.

I smiled indulgently, and thought he was just trying to find some one to pass the time with.

"My home is in America," I replied.

"Well, then, I don't suppose you are related to Walter Witten?"

Then I remembered that my father had served through the Zulu War.

"Yes," I said, "he was my father."

The old boy looked again, and his wrinkled face beamed.

"Goodness me, your father and I rode the veldt together during the Zulu War, and to think that he should have such a roughneck son!"

He shook his head as though he felt that all the glory of the past had vanished forever.

"Well, at least you are a soldier, and doing something to help. But he was an officer, and a mighty fine gentleman."

Then he hobbled away, leaning heavily on his stick.

This short unveiling of the distant past rather sobered me and I began to wonder if I really ought not to try and make something of myself. I always felt that something of the kind was what Red had tried to tell me when he was dying. I had a forty-mile ride back to the regiment, and during it I did some tall thinking. I made many fine resolutions, then forgot them all the first time I hit a big town with a gang of fellows.

About this time General Jack Dartnell, who was affectionately known throughout Africa as "Hellfire Jack", undertook to capture De Wet, if given a free hand with both regiments of the I.L.H. Then we did some of the hardest riding I had done since I had scouted for Sir John French with his Flying Column. We kept right on the trail of De Wet, and he led us all over Africa. But we were enjoying it fine; though half the time we were living on a couple of hard-tack a day.

With our brigade we had four twelve-pounders and four pom-poms, besides several machine-guns. After days of hard riding we lost track of De Wet near Bethlehem. Then Dartnell decided to take us to Harrismith and get fresh supplies, and headed for there by the shortest route.

We were riding casually enough, and not expecting trouble. My squadron had been detailed for gun escort that day; so we were having an easy time. Suddenly there was a burst of ragged fire on our front, and I saw Hellfire Jack and his staff, who

had been riding just in front of us, spur their horses and go forward.

The firing increased, and two squadrons swung into action; then came an order for the guns, and we rode in at a gallop. The guns had just unlimbered when all hell broke loose on each flank and our rear at the same moment. The firing in front had just been a ruse, and we were beautifully trapped. But I wasn't worried. I'd served under old Hellfire before and felt sure he'd get us out.

He came galloping up to where we lay, and he sure made a picture of a soldier. In appearance he resembled Buffalo Bill.

First he ordered both the squadrons in front of us to go to the assistance of the left flank. Then he ordered our squadron commander to take us to the right flank. This would have left our front and all the artillery unprotected.

"I'm sorry, sir," said our squadron commander in perplexity, "but I can't leave these guns unprotected."

"You can't, hell! Damn your soul, you do as I say!"

His face was a fiery red, his eyes were wild, and he was foaming at the mouth. I thought he was going to run our commander down, and I guess he would have, if the Boers hadn't charged for the guns at that moment. There was only one squadron to meet nearly a thousand Boers. In a few moments it was a regular cat and dog fight, and I reckon we'd have

been wiped off the map, if the Second Light Horse hadn't charged in and helped us out of a nasty mess.

I'm a bit confused on just what happened, but when the dust had settled down, and we began to take stock of ourselves, they had Hellfire Jack lashed to a wagon wheel. He'd gone plum off his nut, and was a raving maniac. It was one of the most pitiful sights I have ever seen. The men who stood guard over him had tears in their eyes. Every one loved him, but the old boy had cracked, and it came darn near to costing us all our lives.

The two colonels got busy and straightened things out; so we could put up an effective defense. That was De Wet's last real fight. He gave us a terrible trouncing, and we had to halt a day to bury the dead, and our wagons weren't sufficient to carry the wounded, many of them had to struggle along on horseback till we got nearly to Harrismith. Then ambulances came out to meet us.

Hellfire Jack went to hospital under guard, and finally landed in England. He wasn't permanently insane, he'd just cracked up under the strain, and after a few months' rest he was all right; but I don't think he ever went into fighting service again. I read a speech he made at a banquet in London, and he spoke in highest praise of the Imperial Light Horse, said we were the finest fighting men he had known in half a century of service. That was rather generous, considering that our commanding officer had put him

under guard and taken his command away from him.

After our chase around with Hellfire Jack the regiment needed a rest, and we were sent to guard the passes through the Drakensburg. Again I found myself in Death Pass. The Black Terror had become a mere legend, seldom spoken of, and held in ridicule by those who had come into the country in the last year of the war. A few of the old men of the regiment speculated on the chances of its still being in existence, and, if in existence, operating in that part of the country. If still alive it would probably have wandered on to other parts.

After a couple of weeks of quiet idleness, with nothing unusual happening, we began to wonder if the Black Terror wasn't, after all, just a phantasy of our imaginations. We had had no scouting work in some time and the scouts were called on to do picket duty. When my turn came the detail was made up of new men except for the sergeant and myself. These fellows laughed at the idea of the Black Terror being anything but a myth.

We took up our position late in the afternoon. The sun was shining brightly and under its warmth and cheer it was hard to think of danger and mysterious deaths. Sergeant Benson and I joked about the Black Terror and speculated on the possibility of a visit before morning. But we were only half joking.

"Stow your nursery ghost stories, Kid!" laughed Crawford, a Texan, who had come over on a horse

boat from New Orleans. "You and your Black Terror are a bunch of bunk!"

"All right, Texas, you think what you want. But Jonesy, and Travers, and Shelton of the King's Royal Rifles didn't find the Black Terror bunk!"

"Ah, can it!" chirped in Sturgis, from Australia, lighting his pipe and puffing defiantly in the direction of the supposed cave of the Black Terror. "All the yarns you old-timers tell about those fellows are just part of your gag to put a scare into us!"

"Black Terror, 'ell! Youse buggers just 'ad er bad case of D.T.'s!" said a stocky little Cockney. "Yer cawn't scare me! Hi'll heat hall the Black Terrors yer find!"

"You'll have to kill him before you can eat him."

"Hi'll heat 'im erlive! Hi'll——

The Cockney stood gaping and wide-eyed as a snarl broke the quiet of the evening, and a great shiny body shot over our heads from the cliff like a sky-rocket, and crashed into the bushes!

Four rifles cracked at once, followed by a snarl. Then Texas fired again, and put an end to a huge spotted leopard that had been sleeping on a ledge above us. All this time the Cockney stood gaping; and, frankly, I was too scared to move.

"Well, if we hadn't killed him, Kid, you'd have had another big yarn to tell about the Black Terror," said Sturgis. "But you see he's mostly yellow and white."

I said nothing and commenced to roll out my

blankets, keeping my face toward the ground to hide my confusion. I had failed miserably in a moment that called for quick action, steady nerves, and courage. This among men of the veldt was unpardonable; weakness of any kind wasn't tolerated. There men lived in constant danger, and often the lives of all depended upon the courage, quick thought and action of one. But since I had lost Red I seemed to have lost my nerve, and was all shot to pieces.

We played poker until late in the night. The game was only interrupted as each time came around to change sentries; when the men relieved would take the place of the man going on duty.

I had drawn the shift next to last, which put me on duty at four o'clock; still nearly two hours before day began to break. The air was chilly; but it was not the coolness of the morning that made my knees rattle when I found myself standing alone in the night on the spot where Jonesy and Travers and a score of others had met their terrible deaths.

Looking cautiously about me I wondered how an armed man could be silently murdered on this post, so long as he kept awake; yet the thought of any man sleeping on duty in Death Pass was ridiculous.

The whole thing was sorely puzzling. I wondered if this mysterious creature first worked some hypnotic power on its victims. I had heard of such things, but gave them little credence. The more I tried to solve the mystery the more jumpy I got;

so I made an effort to put the thought of the Black Terror from me.

For an hour I stood with set jaw and every nerve and sense alert, watching over the sloping side of the mountain and the winding trail of the pass. Behind me and on either side solid rock rose to a height of forty feet. In front of me was a table of rock that stood as high as my waist. The enclosed space wasn't more than six feet square.

It would be hard to find better natural protectio for a sentry: for the darkness of the rocks behind hid him from view. Back up the trail, within calling distance, slept the relief; men whose training would bring them to their feet, alert and ready for action, at the first cry for help. What better position could a man want? Yet my nerves were all jumpy.

A waning moon was dropping to the crest of the range on my right. Its brilliancy threw every rock and bush into bold relief. Overhead the Southern Cross was surrounded by a thousand twinkling stars. The night was glorious, and if I had never heard of the Black Terror I would have enjoyed every moment of it. But beneath the glory of it all, I knew, lay something sinister—something that filled me with dread.

Straining my eyes, I marked every shape and form before me, as far as I could see. My ears were keyed to catch the slightest sound of movement. Across the rock before me lay my Lee-Enfield rifle, cocked and with nine cartridges in it. I pulled my Webley pistol

from its holster and stuck it in the top of my right legging, ready.

With my hand gripping the rifle and my finger curved around the trigger I watched and waited, crouching with nerves almost to the breaking point, for something terrible to happen.

In the east the first glimmers of day were blending with the silver of the moon. It was the witching hour—the hour of death and mystery. Rocks and bushes were changing shape.

Far down the mountain side I saw something moving. Whatever it was it was coming toward me. At first it was just a dark object. But as it drew nearer the moon threw it into relief, and I made out the huge dark body of a human being, crawling cautiously from rock to rock.

A native runner—of that I was certain—the thought of a human being of any sort moving about me in that terrible hour in Death Pass was a comfort. Crouching behind my rock, with my rifle following his every movement, I decided to capture him alone.

With the breaking of daylight, and the thought of another human being near me and awake, my courage began to return. I knew that if I captured a native runner alone in Death Pass, without disturbing the relief, I would offset my failure of the night before, and my standing would be jake. For the moment all thought of the Black Terror vanished. In my kid fancy I could hear the men and

officers of the regiment complimenting me on my coolness.

Now my victim was not more than twenty paces from me. In another moment he would be upon the short strip of level that ran in front of my rock. Then suddenly a horrifying thought flashed into my mind: "If this is a native runner, why is he approaching the post? Why isn't he making for the trail over the mountain?"

Cold chills ran down my spine. I began to tremble. But it was too late! The silent prowler, whatever it was, was now not more than a dozen paces away!

Steeling my nerves and leveling the rifle on the center of his head, I gave the challenge: "Halt! Who goes there?"

Instantly my blood froze cold; for, as I shouted, a huge monster rose up and towered above me! Its great hairy arms reached out with terrible taloned hands toward me! The moon glistened on long white fangs that stuck out from its great gaping jaws.

Paralyzed with fear I crouched immovable, rigid, as with steady strides, through an age of time, it came toward me. Then my rifle flashed, and a scream that shattered every nerve in my body split the morning and echoed over the mountain.

The spell was broken, and I was firing my rifle as rapidly as I could. Yet on came the great beast! It was like a nightmare. With each shot, fired point blank at him, he let out a howl of rage,—but kept coming on.

My rifle was empty! I threw it down and pulled my pistol and fired again and again right into the massive form above me. Then the great hands caught me by both arms, and I felt my bones crack and snap. The huge mouth was open above me, hot saliva dropped on my face, the long white fangs were closing down!

I closed my eyes to shut out the horror. Then a volley of rifles rattled over me, followed by another snarl of rage, and I felt myself being crushed down behind the rock by a great weight that was smothering me.

Next Benson and Sturgis were lifting me up, while the others were rolling the great weight aside. I was broken and helpless, trembling from head to foot; for I was wild with fear.

"Why, blawst it all! It must be the Black Terror!" laughed Tobias, a gangling Englishman, but there was an unnatural ring in his laugh.

"I'll be eternally damned! Waking the whole goddam camp for nothing but a monkey!" This from Texas, who calmly lit a cigarette and flicked the match away.

It was a monkey all right, but a monkey that measured nearly nine feet in height—with arms six feet long and fangs that could pierce from side to side of a man's throat.

CHAPTER 15

Drab Life Again

AFTER I had lost Red I made a pal of Bill Hay, an old sailor, who was probably the oldest man in the regiment. I being the youngest, we made a good combination. But Bill was a fine fellow, and if any man ever lived on the square, and traveled on the level, he did. He was the only man I know of in the regiment who was given "Exemplary" on his discharge. The best any of the rest of us got was "Very good."

Bill told me he had been at sea for forty years. His hair was almost white, and his face had a thousand wrinkles; but I never knew him to fall down on a job, and he rode as well as most of us. Bill's code of life was summed up in a few words; "Give every man, woman, and child you meet a square deal."

In the dreary weeks that followed, Bill gave me many thoughts to ponder on through life. We rode knee to knee, and he never seemed to tire of handing me sugar-coated advice. Often some of the finest things he told me were expressed in the choicest profanity. He knew the world, and had seen the inside of hell-dives of nearly every country. I believe, in his

profane, honest way, Bill told me all the things Red had tried to say the morning he died. Though they didn't do me much good then, they took root, and years after I tried to profit by them.

Every day we got new evidences that the war was really at an end. The Boers were surrendering in hundreds. Many of them saw the futility of carrying on, and wanted to have the thing ended, so that they could get back to their farms. If they would take an oath of allegiance to Britain, they were allowed to go free. Many of them took the oath, and a number of these went even further and volunteered to help the British and the war. Of course they were valuable; but I could never help feeling a dislike for them. I didn't mind their coming in and surrendering, or even taking an oath of allegiance; but I did object to their fighting against their own people, even if it was common sense to do so. I didn't trust them, and hoped I wouldn't be asked to scout or otherwise serve with them. But, in this, luck was against me.

One day I was ordered to headquarters for scouting duty, and found that I was expected to go out on a long reconnaissance with another I.L.H. scout and three turn-coat Boers. Then, for the first and only time as a soldier, I refused to obey an order.

"You object to working with these men?" asked the adjutant, and I detected a note of sympathy in his tone.

"Yes, sir. I'd rather make the reconnaissance alone."

"But you don't know the country, and are not as familiar with the enemy as these men are."

"That's true, sir. But I'd like to be excused."

Then he drew nearer to me and spoke in a lower tone.

"You and Patrick are being sent to keep watch on them. If they play fair in this reconnaissance, and we can depend on the information they bring, it may mean the end of the war."

"Very good, sir." I gave in at this. "But, if they don't play fair, some of this crowd won't come back."

"Splendid, splendid!" he whispered. "That's the very reason you two have been chosen. If there's any trickery, shoot, and shoot to kill. Patrick has the same instructions."

We five rode out on a four-day reconnaissance. The Boers were silent, and Patrick and I kept pretty well to ourselves. There was no doubt about their realizing that we distrusted them. This must have hurt them a bit, and theirs must have been a very unpleasant situation; for they had placed themselves in a position where no matter what they did it would be wrong and lay them open to criticism. Now, as I write about them, they have my sympathy; but at the time I felt nothing but disgust and distrust for them.

They played the game all right, and by circuitous trails showed us things we had no idea about. We rode mostly at night, and lay in well-concealed places

through the day. Patrick and I kept a close watch on them. When we made camp they were so anxious to please us that they offered to do all the picket work and let us sleep. But this we refused, and one of us was awake all the time. Also we kept our arms close. On the other hand, they did all they could to show their trust in us; they left their guns lying about the camp, and all of them would lie down and sleep at the same time.

The result of this scouting expedition was the capture, not of De Wet, but of the Boer leader, De Beers. Through the help of our Boer friends we located De Beers' stronghold. Patrick and two of the Boers stayed to watch De Beers' movements, in case he should learn of the British approach; and I with the other Boer rode back to the regiment to give the information and guide the column for the attack. But there was no attack. As soon as De Beers found that we were upon him he sent out a man with a white flag and message to say that he was ready to surrender to Colonel Briggs of the first I.L.H.

De Beers had about a thousand men; so again the first Imperial Light Horse had the honor of capturing a force double its strength in numbers. When this message came in from De Beers, a reply was sent back to the effect that he would have to surrender to the commanding general. Then De Beers replied that he would either surrender to Colonel Briggs or he'd fight, that he admired Colonel Briggs more than any other officer of the British service.

So the commanding general conceded to De Beers' wishes, and I had the honor of riding out with Colonel Briggs as a scout of his staff for the formal surrender of one of the greatest of the Boer leaders.

We were lying at Krugersdorp when Bill and I decided to take our discharges. We both wanted to get out of the country, and knew that if we waited till all the regiments were disbanded, we would have difficulty in getting a ship. We had to pass through Joburg to get on the mainline to Cape Town. In Joburg I went to the bank to draw out the money Red and I had deposited at various times. I had no idea what it amounted to and was surprised to find we had over twelve hundred pounds. I wrote a check for the entire amount, and the cashier looked at me as if I were crazy.

"That's a lot of money for a boy to carry around," he suggested. "Why don't you draft it to your home?"

"I'm not going home," I said. "I'm going to take a look at Europe."

"Well, then, send it wherever you are going."

"But, I'm going all over the country."

"That's all right. Suppose we send it to the Bank of England? You'll no doubt be going to London first."

After some persuasion, and much doubt on my part, I agreed to draft seven hundred pounds to London. Banking was all a mystery to me, and much too complicated, and I felt some doubt of ever get-

ting my money. So I left the bank with four hundred pounds in bank notes and one hundred pounds in gold sovereigns in my pocket. Then at Cape Town I got a bunch of back pay. This was a tidy little sum for a seventeen-year-old boy who had the wildest of habits and no one to control him.

Old Bill, my pal, set out with the very best of intentions to guide me in the right way; but Cape Town, with its wide open pubs, and its hundreds of girls, imported from all Europe, was too much for Bill, and he was as much in need of guidance as I was. He had left his philosophies on the veldt, and when we hit the Cape he was just a rip-roaring sailor ashore. He soon got a good berth on a ship going to India and grabbed it. That was the last I ever saw or heard of Bill. I doubt if he is alive to-day; but if he is, I hope that we will meet again, for I want to tell him that in recent years I have been traveling along the trails he used to talk about to me.

Besides the hundreds of girls that swarmed into the African ports for easy pickings from soldiers on leave, crooks from all over the world came too. A man had to watch his step to keep from being cleaned out. The girls, that is, most of them, gave something for what they took. But the crooks just robbed a man, and if it was necessary black-jacked him first. Having lived among crooks, I had no trouble in recognizing them, and when they approached me I made no bones about letting them know I was on to their game. While awaiting discharge we had to remain

in camp from eight o'clock in the morning till five in the evening; though we had little or nothing to do. The second evening, when a crowd of us were preparing to go to town, I got out my Webley revolver, loaded it, and strapped it on my hip. This brought a roar from the crowd.

"Gee! the kid doesn't know the war is over!"

"Who you planning to hold up?"

And a number of similar remarks; but I didn't care. I was carrying more money than most of them, and though I made no boast about what I had, there were several who knew I had plenty, and these were likely unwittingly to give the information to the crooks when they had had a few drinks.

Later in the evening a bunch of us were drinking in the Good Hope Bar, and a slant-eyed fellow came up to me and began talking about America. I recognized his approach and paid little attention until he became a bit insistent; then I pulled the gun around in its holster where he couldn't fail to see it.

"Is that a real gun?" he asked with a sickly smirking smile.

"Yes, and it's loaded too!"

"What you carrying a loaded gun down here for?"

"To shoot goddam crooks like you!" I snarled at him. "You'd better beat it, and try working on some one easier!"

With that he left his drink standing on the bar and hurried out.

The Good Hope Bar was my favorite during the war. I believe it is about the only bar in Cape Town that wasn't wrecked on one or more occasions by troops. But the Good Hope tried to protect its soldier patrons from crooks, and I never heard of any one getting anything but a square deal there.

It was not the same with many of the bars; some of them were actually in league with the crooks who had gathered in Cape Town for the purpose of robbing the soldiers. Often a man would be served a doped drink, and when he woke up find himself lying out in some back alley with all his money gone. If he could remember where he had been given dope, he would report it to his mates, and wrecking of the bar followed. All it needed to get a place demolished was for half a dozen men to start down the street and tell every soldier they met. Regulars and Colonials all readily joined in the frays, and they were a heap of fun. I took part in several. We would rush a place, turn the tables upside down, pull off the legs, and lay about us. First we'd beat up the proprietor, and any of his bouncers that didn't have better sense than to try to interfere. This done, we'd smash every bottle, glass and mirror. Sometimes we piled the furniture in the middle of the place and set fire to it; but this was done on only one or two occasions, because it endangered the lives and properties of innocent people, and most soldiers have a strongly developed sense of fairness.

When we went to wreck a place the police, both

civil and military, were unable to do anything, and generally they kept out of the way; for they were nearly always in sympathy with us, knowing that only some high-handed methods of robbery would cause a man's place to be wrecked. I performed only one tour of duty while at Green Point. I was in charge of the guard of the camp jail.

The jail consisted of two rooms, one large one for the prisoners and a smaller one for the guard. It was packed with men serving short sentences, some waiting trial for minor offenses, and some waiting trial for serious crimes—two of them for murder.

We had had a lot of rain and bad weather, but the morning I went on duty the sun was shining and it was a wonderful day. First I posted my sentries, and ordered a couple of men to tidy up the guard-room; then I opened the prisoners' room and walked in to inspect them. I was unarmed and gave no thought to danger. At first I noticed a number of scowls, but as I stood and talked their expressions changed, and before I went out we were all laughing and chatting.

"Don't you fellows want to clean this place up, and put your blankets out to air?" I asked.

"No, thanks, sergeant, we're comfortable. Don't worry about us."

This surprised me; but as they were only under my charge for twenty-four hours I wasn't going to fuss with them over their own comfort. So I turned and started out of the room.

"We'd like some fresh water for drinking," said one, picking up a bucket.

"All right," I said. "Go ahead and get it."

He followed me into the guard-room, then stood there waiting.

"Don't you know where the hydrant is?" I asked. "It's round the side of the jail."

"Sure I do, but how about an escort?"

"Escort, hell! go get your water. Try and escape and I'll drop you before you get a hundred yards."

At that he laughed, and went out and got his water. A few days later he was sentenced to seven years' hard labor. He was one of the worst in the gang. But he got his water, came back, and thanked me with a smile.

Late in the morning a fat, blustering sergeant-major, the typical non-com of a base camp, came round, and demanded in offensive tones to know what I had done, and what I proposed to do.

"Oh, I've tidied up a bit, posted my sentries, and after lunch we'll have a game of poker," I grinned at him.

With that he fairly spluttered, and demanded to know if I had all my prisoners.

"Sure thing," I said, and unlocked the door leading into the prisoners' room. "Want to count 'em?" I grinned.

"Lock that door! Lock that door!" he yelled, and waddled as fast as his fat legs would take him out of the guard-room.

"What's the matter?" I asked. "Don't you want to see the prisoners?"

But apparently he had very urgent business at the other end of the camp; for he went away almost on the run, and for the moment seemed to have forgotten the dignity of his rank.

"What's the matter with old Pot Belly?" I asked the prisoners, who were grinning.

"The son-of-a-swab knows he'll get his brains bashed out, if we ever lay hold of him!"

"Why, ain't he popular?" I laughed.

"Yea, he's as popular as a pole-cat at a garden party. The dirty yellow swine!"

"He looks it, all right," I said, and walked in among them again.

"Say, do you know you're the only non-com that's had guts enough to pass that door for a month?" a prisoner asked me.

"No, is that a fact? What are they scared of?" I lit my pipe.

"See that door-jamb behind you? That's where the last non-com that came in here got his brains bashed out!"

I looked at the door jamb, and saw that it was covered with dark brown splotches, and smeared with gray matter from which tufts of hair stuck. I was familiar enough with such things to recognize it as the brains, hair and blood of a human being.

"Gee, you fellows treat 'em rough. Hope you haven't got any grudge against me."

"You're all right, sergeant. You're off the veldt. It's these fat base loafers we're after."

"Yeah, but don't call me 'sergeant'; I don't like to be classed with that crowd."

"Ain't you a sergeant? How come you got to be in charge of the guard?"

"Well, I happen to be a scout, and am here waiting discharge. Why don't they clean this muck off?" I pointed to the door jamb.

"Guess they're leaving it there as evidence, and we're leaving it there as a warning to the swine to keep out." At this we all laughed.

That evening I went in to see them again. There was no furniture in the room and they had their blankets spread out all over the floor. There were two games going; one crowd was playing brag, and another poker. I watched the poker for a few minutes; then accepted an invitation to take a hand. That was one of the best games I have ever had. Everybody seemed to be in recklessly good humor, and I might have known that they had something up their sleeves; but, I will frankly admit, at the time I had no suspicion. We played and talked and laughed and at a late hour I said good night.

In the morning, just before the new guard was due to relieve me, I went in and shook hands all round and wished them luck. Then when the new guard came I took the sergeant in and made him count the prisoners. He was a bit nervous, and insisted on our both being armed, and taking several of the guards

in with us. I laughed at this, and saw a number of the prisoners smiling.

That night, with the exception of a few short-time men, the whole gang escaped. They had cut a hole through the floor, and dug an underground passage that led out the back. The short-time men and several of those who were captured some days later told the Board of Enquiry that they were all ready and had planned to escape the night that I was in charge of the guard, but changed their plans because I had treated them decently and they didn't want me to get in trouble. It is probable that they recognized in me an outlaw spirit. Anyhow, I'm glad that I chummed with them and joined in the poker game; for I heard afterward, though not officially, that the officers in charge of the base made the sergeant of the guard the goat, and that he got six months' hard labor.

In the I.L.H. we had two North American Indians, one a Sioux and the other, I think, an Apache. They had both come over on horse boats, and both were mighty popular in the regiment. Tom Crow, who had chummed with me on the veldt, was all that one could ask for as a plainsman, a soldier and a good pal. Tom came down to Green Point for discharge with me, and like Bill got his discharge some time before I did. Finally my papers came through and I was paid off. Then I went to stay at the Good Hope Hotel. I had ordered a suit of clothes made at a good tailor's, and got out of uniform immediately.

In the bar of the hotel I met Tom, still in uniform, and still the wonderful picture of a soldier he had always been. His skin was a little dark, but Tom was clean white all through.

"Hello, Kid!" he greeted me. "Let's drink to freedom, and the good old Stars and Stripes!"

We drank and talked for a time; then I asked him in to lunch.

"I want you to lunch with me to-morrow, Kid. I've had a swell outfit made, and it'll be ready tonight. So to-morrow we'll celebrate and the party's on me."

"All right, Tom, that's a bargain."

The next morning I was sitting on the veranda of the hotel waiting for Tom, when I heard a man exclaim: "For cripe's sake! What in the hell is this coming down the street?"

I looked in the direction every one was looking, and there I saw what looked like the end-man of a minstrel show. Broad checks, a three-inch collar, large bow tie, wide panama hat, white spats, pale tan shoes, a huge bunch of violets, and a light cane, carried by chamois-gloved hands.

"Whoopee! must be a minstrel show in town!" I said.

Then, holy horrors, this apparition drew nearer, and it was Tom Crow. I began to think, and think hard. I'm no snob, but I didn't have the nerve to parade around Cape Town in company with this freakish looking fellow.

"Hello, Kid!" He waved his cane. "How do you like the nifties?"

"Swell, Tom, damn swell!" I saw the crowd laughing, and I guess Tom did too, for there was a red flush coming through his tan.

"Where'll we go for lunch, Kid?" he asked, and there was a bit of a catch in his voice.

I never felt so rotten. Tom wasn't the sort of fellow you took pleasure in hurting. In his proper setting he was a prince; but Tom as a soldier, and Tom as a civilian were two entirely different cases. I didn't want him to go on being a laughing stock, yet I didn't know how to tell him. But Tom was no fool, and I guessed that he had already suspected that there was something wrong with his get-up.

"Say, Tom, do you remember that girl I told you about meeting in Durban?"

"Yeah, you mean the Sleeping Beauty?"

"That's her. Well, she's been here in Cape Town for some time," I lied, "and she's leaving to-day. I didn't know she was here till this morning. And, you know, we'd sorter like to be together."

"Sure, Kid, I understand."

"I knew you would, Tom. How about meeting tonight?"

"All right, I'll see you then." He turned to walk away.

"Say, Tom," a bright thought struck me. "Let's wear uniform. We can have more fun than in civies."

"Anything you say, Kid."

As we walked away a big lout standing near me made a wise crack about Tom's clothes. It would have been all right if he'd made it in a low voice, but he said it loud enough for Tom to hear. So I swung on him with a straight drive to his jaw with my right, and a swift kick in his stomach. He went to the floor, and the crowd just laughed. Tom turned and saw what had happened, which had been all in a few seconds. He never said a word, but just stood there waiting to see if the fellow had any friends who were ready to join in. Then, when he saw that nothing more was happening, he walked away, and I could tell by his walk that he wasn't very happy.

We met in the evening, both of us in uniform, and Tom was his old gallant happy self again. Neither of us made any mention of the morning, but during the evening he told me how he had come right off the prairie with a drove of horses, and had shipped straight through with them to New Orleans and then to Africa. Beyond a couple of days in New Orleans he'd never seen much of city life. He asked me where I'd had my clothes made, and when I told him, he wanted me to go with him and help him get another outfit. I made no particular comment, and next day I took him to my tailor and had him measured for a blue serge like the one I had bought. Then I made a few suggestions about ties and shoes. But Tom was an observant cuss, and wasn't likely to slip far in dress again.

In Cape Town my money was melting away. I was drinking heavily and each morning I would take just a few drinks to sober up from the effects of the night before and long before evening I'd be roaring drunk again.

I was entitled to free passage to England or any other place I wanted to go, and on the days I was sober enough I went to the Embarkation offices and asked for passage, but there were thousands of men in Cape Town waiting for the same thing. Many of these had waited so long that they'd gone broke and were panhandling for a living. Finally I decided to pay my own passage and booked a berth on one of the Castle Line boats; I have forgotten which one now, but she was one of the most palatial in the South African Trade. So that while I came to Africa as one of the crew of a dirty little tramp steamer, I left as cabin passenger on one of the best boats in the African trade.

When I landed in London I had every intention in the world of seeing the best of Europe and had several hundred pounds with which to do it, but I am sorry to say that by the time most of my money was spent all I knew was the inside of a few pubs and dives.

I attempted to see a number of my English relatives, but I found that they were not very anxious to see me. At the time I thought it was pretty rotten of them, but now that I look back I see that they were justified, for I was pretty wild and very crude.

The fact that my own relatives did not want me around is perhaps the reason that I found associates among men and women of London's night life who, of course, helped me to spend my money. I found my position much the same as it was in Cape Town, just drinking and playing around with the girls of Leicester Square.

About this time King Edward's coronation was taking place and I was asked to stay and ride in the parade. I was fed up with everything and suddenly got a longing for my own country; so I bought a passage for New York and sailed on the S.S. *Philadelphia.*

While I had been abroad my family had moved to the Tennessee mountains, so that when I reached my own city I had no place to go to and was almost like a stranger there.

Two things had always kept a fond place in my memory of home, one was ice-cream sodas and the other was hot roasted peanuts. As soon as I had checked my baggage at the dock after arriving, I went to the nearest soda fountain and bought two strawberry sodas; then I bought a large bag of peanuts and rode on the Sixth Avenue "L" until I had eaten them all.

I stayed around New York until my money was almost gone. Then I bought a pullman ticket for Nashville, Tennessee. The last time I had ridden into Nashville I had been on the rods of a freight. A few days later I broke my last twenty-dollar bill to pay

the man who drove me up the mountains to Spencer, Tennessee. Then for some time I went back to the drab life most people lead.

I soon found that I had become a man who "didn't fit in."